

LANGUAGE, CASTE, RELIGION AND TERRITORY

Newar identity ancient and modern

Between the Newars, however, and the other Hindoo inhabitants of Nepal, there subsist, as well as in character, customs, manners and features, as in religious rites and language, very essential differences, all of them abundantly proving that they are an insulated race of men, whose origin is not to be traced to any of the nations immediately surrounding them. They are a peaceable, industrious, and even ingenious people, very much attached to the superstitions they profess, and tolerably reconciled to the chains imposed on them by their Gorkhali conquerors [...] I doubt whether this nation have been at any period of a warlike disposition; be this as it may, it is certain that their courage is at present spoken of very slightly by the Purbutties, or Hindoo mountaineers [...] Their occupations are chiefly those of agriculture, besides which they almost exclusively execute all the arts and manufactures known in this country.

Colonel KIRKPATRICK, *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal*, 1811

As the inhabitants of one country [the Newars] are one —but in regard to case, they are diverse.

Hodgson's friend and informant, AMRTÁNANDA, 1820s

La conquête gourkha a introduit [le népal] dans la vallée centrale, où le névari, plus vigoureux que ses voisins, le tient encore en échec ; mais la centralisation du gouvernement assure son triomphe [...]

Sylvain LÉVI, *Le Népal*, 1905

The Newars have demonstrated their ability in almost all walks of life. They have proved their worth as top administrators, educationists, traders magnates of industry, and high-level technicians. They are also adventure-seekers, both within and without the country [...] The Jyapoos, one section of the Newars, are among the best peasants in the world [...] The high offices in the royal court are also mostly manned by the Newars, who or whose great-grandfathers, they say, were appointed by the Ranas on purpose. But, quite contrary to the expectation of the then Rana rulers, the Newars proved their integrity and loyalty, and have long been enjoying the privilege of being treated as among the most loyal and dependable servants of the Crown and country.

Yubraj S. PRADHAN, introduction to *An Essay on the History of Newar Culture*, by K. P. CHATTOPADHYAY, 1980

During the previous decade several Newars had gone to Ceylon and Burma to study the Pali Scriptures and be ordained there, and at least one Theravada Buddhist monk from Ceylon had visited Nepal. A minor revival of Buddhism was, in fact, in progress among them. This revival was not unconnected with the political aspirations of the Newars, who felt themselves to be a subject people in their own homeland, and it was therefore regarded with grave suspicion by the Rana despotism...

The Rev. SANGHARAKSHITA, *The Thousand-Petalled Lotus*, 1976

Bhāṣā mvaḍ sā jāti mvaḍi (If the language survives, the nation/group will survive).

Poet SIDDHIDAS MAHAJU

We may therefore conclude thus : the Newars are the main group (*jāti*) of Nepal. Newars are its original inhabitants. This is supported by our appearance, our language and our customs. Subsequently others came from all four directions of the compass and entered this central origin-point, our country Nepal. That they should be attracted to the centre is only natural. Since they came here and entered into regular contact with the locals, and called themselves Newars, they also had some influence. Certain words

of the language they brought with them, and certain of their customs, became part of Newar society [... But] the basic customs and language remained intact. Thus we can say that the Newars are not just a caste (*jāt*) but an ethnic group (*jāti*) and a nation (*rāṣṭra* *). This is the reason why scholars say 'the history of the Newars is the history of Nepal'.

SVAYAMBHU LAL SHRESTHA, Nayar and Newar, in *Jhiji*, 1968

* *rāṣṭra* is glossed with the English word 'nation' in the original.

1. Introduction

THE NEWARS are the indigenous inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley, a bowl-shaped plateau about fifteen miles across at a height of approximately 4,000 feet in the Himalayan foothills. It is a plateau in that the major rivers in the immediate area (the Trisuli and the Sunkosi) pass it by at a much lower level. The Valley is surrounded by a rampart of hills rising to 7 or 8,000 feet; according to local belief and myth, and according to geology, the Valley was once a lake. Its soil is exceptionally fertile by Himalayan, or indeed any, standards. Thanks to this, and to the Valley's strategic position astride trade routes to Tibet, it has a long and distinguished history. Written records (inscriptions) begin in the fifth century A.D. and give evidence of a high and literate civilization derived from the Indian plain *. The inscriptions are written in a chaste and pure Sanskrit not met with in later periods, but the place-names reveal that the bulk of the population spoke an ancient form of the present-day Newars' language, Newari (Malla 1981 (1)). Whereas most of the rest of Nepal remained thinly inhabited and rustic till the modern period, the Kathmandu Valley

* The best introduction written in English to the early history of Nepal is to be found in M. SLUSSER, *Nepal Mandala. A cultural study of the Kathmandu Valley* (Princeton University Press, 1982). ch. 2. — The standard ethnography of the Newars used to be G. S. NEPALI, *The Newars. An ethno-sociological study of a Himalayan Community* (Bombay, United Asia Publications, 1965), and, although there is still much of value in it, it is now superseded by G. TOFFIN, *Société et religion chez les Néwar du Népal* (Paris, Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1984). The best introduction to the political history of Nepal is Bh. JOSHI and L. E. ROSE, *Democratic Innovations in Nepal. A case study of political acculturation* (Berkeley/Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1966). — I was alerted to Burghart's excellent article 'The formation of the concept of Nation-State in Nepal' *Journal of Asian Studies*, XLIV (1984) 1, 101-125, too late to incorporate systematic reference to it. It can profitably be read in conjunction with the present essay.

See also : M. GABORIEAU, *Minorités musulmanes dans le royaume hindou du Népal* (Nanterre, Laboratoire d'ethnologie, 1977); N. DOHERTY, Notes on the origins of the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal, in J. F. FISHER (ed.), *Himalayan Anthropology : the Hindu-Tibetan interface* (The Hague/Paris, Mouton, 1978); M. LAANATZA, Ethnic conflicts in Islamic societies. Politicization of Berbers in North Africa and Kurds in Iraq, in S. TĀGIL (ed.), *Religions in Upheaval, Ethnic Conflict and Political Mobilization* (Lund, Scandinavian University Press, 1984).

(1) Sharma (1983) also suggests that the unique socio-religious organization of Newars today, the *guthi*, is directly descended from a counterpart in the Licchavi period.

was able to support a division of labour and a sophisticated urban civilization impossible elsewhere in the Himalayan foothills between Kashmir and Assam.

The Shah dynasty of the present king of Nepal, Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, comes originally from Gorkha, a small town roughly forty miles to the west of the Kathmandu Valley. Before Gorkha the dynasty derives its descent, as did all the petty kings and chiefs of central Nepal in the Middle Ages, from Rajasthan: they claim to be the offspring of Rajput refugees from the Muslim conquest who fled to the Himalayas. By the beginning of the eighteenth century the Shah kings of Gorkha began to be involved in the politics of the Valley, allying now with one, now with another of the three kingdoms into which the Valley had been divided since the sixteenth century. In 1768-9 Prithvi Narayan Shah, nowadays officially styled 'the Great', succeeded by hard work, daring and ruthless courage, after a struggle of twenty-five years, in conquering all three of them. They were ruled by related Malla dynasties, but right up to the last they schemed and fought against each other. Prithvi Narayan Shah and his successors went on to conquer great stretches of the Himalayas, as far as Kangra in the west and Sikkim in the east. Eventually however, as a result of two wars with the East India Company, a political unit resulted which corresponded, give or take one or two subsequent boundary adjustments, to modern Nepal (2).

The ethnic basis of Prithvi Narayan's unification (as it is called in school textbooks) was the gradual migration of the Parbatiya ('hill') people eastward through the Himalayas. This had begun before Prithvi Narayan Shah, but the creation of the new state undoubtedly facilitated and encouraged it; indeed it often directly involved land grants in new areas to supporters of the Shah regime. Primarily these supporters were Parbatiyas, that is, of the Bahun (Brāhman) or Chetri (Kṣatriya) castes. Also involved however were followers from the Tibeto-Burman hill tribes, mainly Magars, but also some Gurungs. Another aspect of the spread of Parbatiyas and their culture was the diffusion throughout the hills of the Parbatiya low castes (mainly tailors, metal-workers and leather-workers). These low castes are still today often the first Parbatiyas to settle in remote areas and introduce Tibetan or tribal populations to caste ideas and practices. No doubt this was true in the past too.

Parbatiyas also settled in the Kathmandu Valley before Prithvi Narayan conquered it, encouraged to do so by the Malla kings of Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur, for whom they were mercenaries (Vajracharya 1962: 180-7). After 1769 their numbers gradually increased so that today Newars form barely half its population (3). Nevertheless, contrary

(2) On the career of Prithvi Narayan Shah and the creation of the modern Nepali state, see Stiller 1973.

(3) According to the census of 1971 Newari-speakers form 47 per cent of the

Valley's population, and Nepali-speakers 46.7 per cent (Toffin 1984: 48-9). Since however it is language, not ethnicity, that is asked for, many Newars will have been entered, often correctly, as Nepali-speaking.

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to what happened elsewhere in Nepal, the Newars have not been easily absorbed into the Parbatiya caste hierarchy (4). Until recently Newars of the Valley made no use of Parbatiya specialists, whether priestly (Bāhun) or artisanal (low caste). The two groups, while living close together, and interacting politically and economically (e.g. as landlord and tenant), remained socially separate. The reason for this is that the Newars already had a sophisticated caste system providing all necessary services, and so they formed, and still form to a surprising degree, a society apart. Table I gives a very simplified, but for present purposes adequate, model of the Newar caste hierarchy (5).

TABLE I

A simplified model of the Newar caste system

Newar Brāhmaṇs	Vajrācāryas (Buddhist priests) and Śākya (goldsmiths, artisans)
Śreṣṭhas (incl. Jośī, Pradhān, etc.) (civil servants, businessmen, shop-keepers)	Urāy (i.e. Tulādhar, etc.) (businessmen, artisans)
farmers (Jyāpu, i.e. Maharjan, etc.)	
various artisan and service castes	
death specialists (Jogi)	butchers
sweepers : untouchable castes	
} <i>unclean castes</i>	

The crucial point to notice about the Newar caste hierarchy is that it is twin-headed : there are two priestly castes, the Brāhmaṇs (who are very few in number) and the Buddhist priest-monk caste, comprised of two sections, the Vajrācāryas (who have a monopoly on serving as priests

(4) Höfer (1979 : 135-141) notes some of the inconsistencies in the Mulukhi Ain (law code) of 1854 which tried to place different Newar castes within the Parbatiya hierarchy.

(5) More detail on Newar castes can be

found at Rosser 1966 : 85-6, 89; Allen 1973 : 5; Greenwold 1974 : 103-4; Gutschow and Kölver 1975 : 56-8; Chattopadhyay 1980 : 53 f. The latest and the most sophisticated account is by Toffin 1984 : 261 and 278-306.

to others) and the Śākya (who with the Vajrācāryas have exclusive rights to attend Buddhist shrines). Immediately below the two priestly castes are two other castes, the Śreṣṭhas and the Urāy, with predominantly Hindu and Buddhist identities respectively. Apart from these castes, other Newars do not have a strong identity that excludes either Buddhism or Hinduism : they take part in the festivals and frequent the shrines of both religions, the particular amalgam being determined by the traditions of each family's caste and locality.

It is important to note how Newar castes divide up in terms of the *varṇa* system, that pan-South Asian ethnosociological framework which (though too schematic to serve as a description of local hierarchies) is very significant for understanding how particular castes see and present themselves. From the Newar point of view, the farmers and similar clean castes are usually considered to be Śūdras (servant status), while Śreṣṭhas occupy the Kṣatriya (noble, ruling) position. Of the strongly Buddhist castes, Vajrācāryas and Śākya (the Buddhist clergy), or at any rate certainly Vajrācāryas, are considered to be 'Buddhist Brāhmins (6), and the Urāy, who claim equality of status with high-caste Śreṣṭhas, justify their high social status in terms of their position as foremost Buddhist laymen (*upāsaka*). From the official Parbatīya viewpoint, and so for many Parbatīyas in the Valley, *all* clean-caste Newars are considered to be Śūdras; in the hills however, they are popularly thought of as Vaisyas because of their preponderance in trade and shopkeeping (see table II) (Bista 1972 : 30; Sharma 1977 : 284, fn. 18). To anticipate points discussed below, the internal dynamics of the Newar caste hierarchy become relevant to the question of ethnic identity at two points : (i) the co-existence of two incompatible, often competitive, religious Great Traditions means that a modern identity cannot be developed around religion; (ii) pre-modern Newar identity focuses particularly on the Śreṣṭha caste occupying the Kṣatriya position, which has important consequences when, in the modern period, social mobility, or rather the possibility of social mobility, suddenly pervades the whole society.

Outside the Kathmandu Valley the story is very different. After the creation of the modern Nepali state many Newars emigrated from the Valley and settled in numerous small trading and administrative towns throughout the hills of Nepal. There, except where they settled in large numbers, they have been absorbed into the caste system of the hills as shown in table II. This distinction between the Newars of the Valley and those of the hills seems to have been tacitly recognized by the Law Code of 1854 since it sometimes refers to the former as 'Newars of the three cities [Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur]' (Höfer 1979 : 135). Some Newars are far more assimilated to Parbatīya culture than others. The furthest

(6) Greenwold (1974) has written an article with this title discussing the role of Śākya and Vajrācāryas as a married caste

of monk-priests. For further information see Allen (1973) and Locke (1980).

extreme is perhaps represented by the inhabitants of Darjeeling who, though descended from Newars, had wholly abandoned Newar culture and the Newari language already in the 1920s (Dharmacharyya 1927 : 23). At the other end of the spectrum, the norm of Newar-ness, so to speak, is represented by the practices of the large royal cities of the Kathmandu Valley.

TABLE II

A simplified model of the caste system in the Nepalese Hills showing the place of Newar castes within it (cf. Höfer, 1979 : 45)

Bāhun (priests, administrators, astrologers, farmers)
Chetris (soldiers, policemen, politicians, administrators, farmers)
Newārs (mostly Śreṣṭhas) (traders, farmers)
various hill-tribes : Gurung, Magar, Tamang, etc. (farmers, servicemen)
Tibetans and others
butchers (<i>Newari</i> : Nāy; <i>Nepali</i> : Kasāī)
Parbatiya untouchables
sweepers (<i>Newari</i> : Po; <i>Nepali</i> : Poḍe)

As a heuristic device I have distinguished six types of Newar settlement shown in table III. It should not be thought however that no-one else inhabits Newar settlements; even in type (ii), the villages of the Newar peasant farmers, there is often the occasional outsider, and in the last type, administrative-bazaar towns in the hills far from the Valley, Newars are in a minority, though still the largest single group (Caplan 1974 : 45). Nor do I claim that every town or village where Newars reside and form a community can be clearly ascribed to one or other type. Certain settlements no doubt combine characteristics of more than one type. Dhulikhel,

for instance, may be a peasant village of type (ii) which has succeeded in turning itself into a trading town of type (iii) (7).

The table is intended to show that there is a general correlation in the pre-modern period between distance from Kathmandu and the degree to which Newars have abandoned Newar culture. For any given family however, the real determinant is whether or not they expect to retain links with the Valley or with one of the towns from category (iv) : this is why the Newar peasants around Ilam do not speak Newari, but the traders in the bazaar do (Caplan 1970 : 192). Within one trading town, such as Arughat, two to three days walk from the Valley, there may be some families who retain links with the Valley and other who do not. Śākya and Vajrācāryas traditionally had to return in order to initiate their sons in a monastery of the Valley (8); for Hindus the equivalent ritual of caste initiation is performed at home, making such a link unnecessary (Fürer-Haimendorf 1956 : 25), but in cases where they were genuinely of high status in their city of origin many Hindus also kept up contact with it, for instance by receiving flowers every year from their relatives' lineage deity worship (*digudyo pūjā*).

The centre of Newar culture is indubitably to be found in the three large cities of the Kathmandu Valley, each of which was the seat of a separate kingdom from 1482 to 1769 when Prithvi Narayan Shah completed his conquest of the Valley (9). There are other smaller cities which imitate these three in the degree of ritual, number of different castes and so on, a status which is exemplified by the presence of a royal palace (whether a recognizable structure exists today or not) at the ritual centre of the city (10). These cities form the first category of settlement. Around these cities, in their ritual and economic catchment area, are numerous small nucleated farming villages. They do not pretend to be royal cities, but in all other ways they are typically Newar.

The third type is formed by trading towns near to the Kathmandu Valley. Some, like Trisuli, are close enough for most of their inhabitants to maintain close links inside the Valley and to return regularly for feasts and life-cycle rites (11). A fourth and distinct category is formed by

(7) The evidence for this speculation is drawn from the thesis of D. Quigley (1984 : 50-1, 283-4), a study of the Śreṣṭhas (landlords and traders) who form more than 90 per cent of the old town's inhabitants.

(8) Since 1951 Buddhists in outlying areas (e.g. Tansen, Butwol, Chainpur) have started to initiate their sons locally in defiance of their ancestral monasteries in the Valley. There are a few villages of Śākya peasants between Trisuli and Arughat in Dhading district who did this before 1951 and, although they retain a residual Buddhist identity, they are not accepted as caste-

equals by the Śākya and Vajrācāryas of Trisuli bazaar.

(9) Officially Lalitpur was ruled from Kathmandu until 1620, but it had enjoyed de facto independence for some seventy years before that.

(10) This theme has been beautifully expounded and illustrated for one of these smaller cities, Panauti, by a French team in Barré *et al.* 1982. I have discussed their findings in Gellner 1984.

(11) A poll, conducted in 1983, of 15 Trisuli shopkeepers (1 Vajrācārya and 14 Śākya) from Kwā Bahā, Lalitpur, revealed that

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TABLE III

A typology of Newar settlements, with some indicators showing the degree of absorption of outlying settlements by Parbatiya culture

	<i>Approximate size by number of houses</i>	<i>Number of castes</i>	<i>Newari spoken</i>	<i>Newar-style architecture present</i>	<i>Ethnicity of priests used</i>	<i>Examples</i>
(i) royal cities	600-20,000	15-20	✓	✓	N ^a	Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, Lalitpur, Panauti, Kirtipur
(ii) villages in or near Kathmandu Valley	40-300	1-5	✓	✓	N	Sunaguthi, Theco, Tokha, Lubhu
(iii) trading towns near the Valley	80-300	c. 8	✓	✓	N	Trisuli
(iv) trading and/or admin. towns 2<10 days walk from Valley	80-300	c. 8	✓ ^b	✓ ^x ^c	N & P	Pokhara, Tansen, Bandipur
(v) peasant settlements near old trade-routes	10-80	1	x ^d	x	P	villages such as Deorali, Katunje, Simri, on the old Ktm-Pokhara road
(vi) trading and/or admin. towns >10 days walk from Valley	20-300	1-2	x	x	P	Darjeeling, Surkhet, 'Belaspur' (Caplan's pseudonym)

N = Newar; P = Parbatiya; ✓ = possesses characteristic in question; x = lacks it.

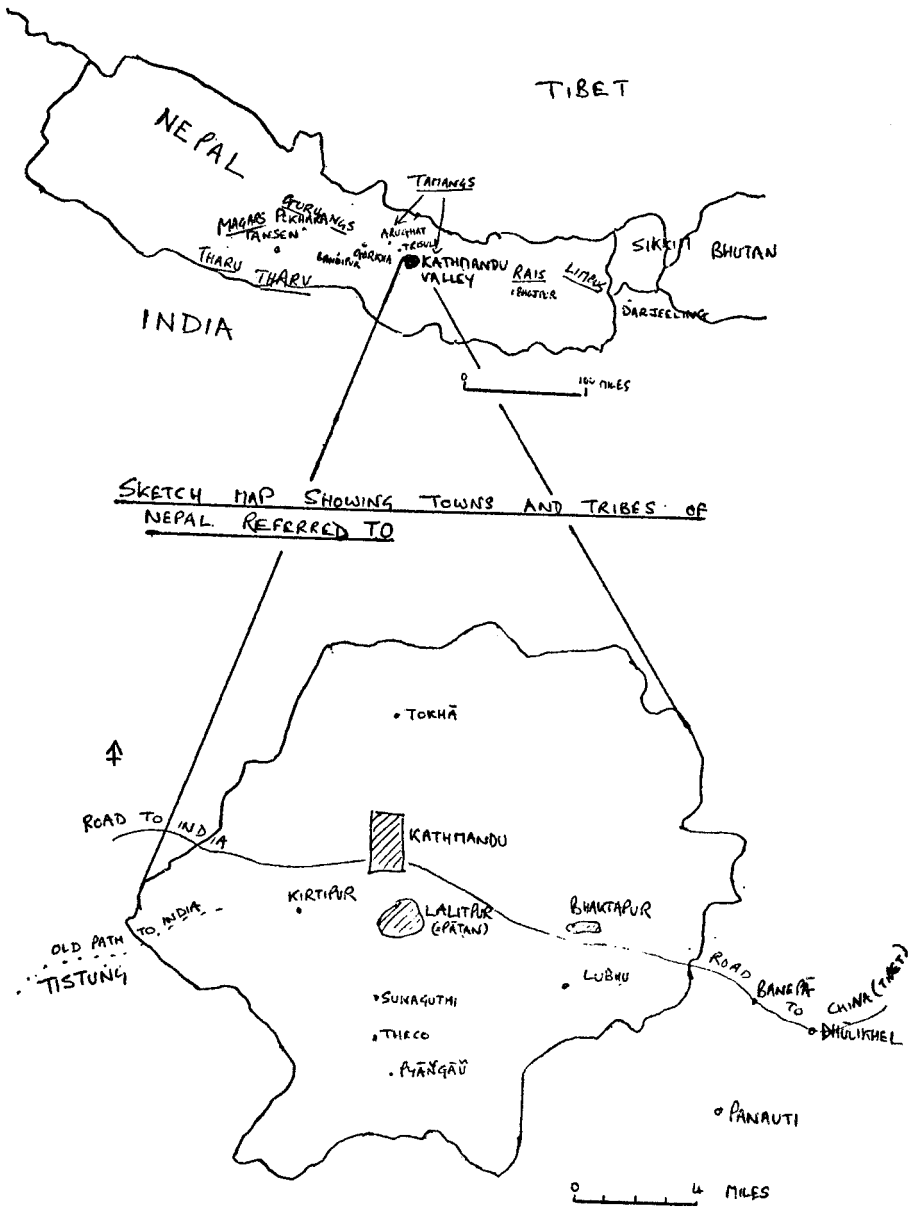
NOTE. All figures are guesstimates. Although all the settlements discussed are predominantly Newar, most of them have Parbatiyas and others also living there; e.g. Kathmandu has had a Muslim minority since the eighteenth century and nowadays also has significant Tibetan, Marwari and other communities.

(a) Recently certain Śreṣṭhas have started to make use of Parbatiya priests (i.e. Bāhuns) in preference to their traditional Newar priest where the latter was Buddhist (i.e. Vajrācārya).

(b) In Gorkha bazaar, which otherwise falls clearly into category (iv), not a word of Newari is spoken by the Newars living there. According to Baburam Acharya (1979 : 17) this is because they have been settled there since the seventeenth century.

(c) These towns display features of Newar-style religious architecture but most of the private houses are built rather in the Parbatiya style.

(d) In some of these settlements the older generation can still speak Newari fluently.



Sketch map of the Kathmandu Valley showing settlements referred to.

trading towns further away, from which it used not to be feasible to return regularly to Kathmandu, Lalitpur or Bhaktapur. In these towns Parbatiya influence is clearer, but they were large enough to preserve Newar culture. Their inhabitants usually marry with Newars from other similar towns (thus Newars from Gorkha, Bandipur, Pokhara and Tansen intermarry, but only very exceptionally succeed in establishing an alliance inside the Kathmandu Valley).

Most of the Newars who emigrated from the Kathmandu Valley along the trade routes of Nepal acquired land where they settled. Many of them ended up as peasant farmers, who have to supplement their income by labouring and portering. In this case they become almost wholly assimilated to Parbatiya culture, and come to constitute a single caste within the local hierarchy as shown in table II. They no longer speak Newari, though they may keep a few Newar customs, such as an annual Lakhe (demon) dance, performing the mock marriage of young girls to the *bel* fruit (12) and organizing ritual associations (*guthi*) to ensure the proper cremation of members after death. The settlements of these Newar peasant farmers are normally strung out in the Parbatiya fashion. They have lost the urban character which makes Newar peasant villages of the Kathmandu Valley so unlike the Parbatiya villages which surround them. These settlements of Newar hill peasants constitute type (v).

A final type, (vi), is hardly a 'Newar' settlement at all. Caplan has described an administrative-bazaar town of the western hills of Nepal, in which Newars form a single caste. It is clear that when they originally came to the town in the train of (Parbatiya) administrators they were of different, often low, castes. They have since coalesced into a single caste and call themselves 'Śreṣṭha' (Caplan 1975 : 25). Like other town-dwellers who are all short of marriage partners, they intermarry not only with each other, but also with Parbatiyas (Caplan 1974). Nonetheless they are recognized as Newars; in this context this means only that they are thought of as a single Parbatiya caste, though the fact that they were once culturally distinct is remembered (Caplan 1975 : 26). In cases like this Newars do not form the majority of the population and so type (vi) settlements are Newar only in the sense of counting numbers of recognized Newars among their inhabitants. Darjeeling might also be considered to fall in this category, though it is outside Nepal and is not therefore a Nepalese administrative town. There the descendants of Newars all call

11 maintained their own house in Lalitpur, 2 stayed with brothers while there and only 2 had neither their own house nor immediate family in their city of origin.

(12) On this ritual see articles by M. Allen (1982) and A. Vergati (1982), and the discussion by Toffin (1984 : 401-5). Hill Newar peasants perform the rite very perfunctorily without calling a priest or incur-

ring great expense, but those I have spoken to do at least retain the idea that it is a specifically Newar tradition. On the other hand, many Newar peasants of the villages *inside* the Valley (category (ii)) do not perform it, nor traditionally do the low castes and untouchables of the cities (Toffin 1984 : 403).

themselves 'Pradhān'; some are Christian, some Hindu, but none preserve anything of Newar identity.

Although Newars have spread throughout Nepal and beyond, they do not constitute a diaspora like that of the Jews or the Greeks under the Ottoman Empire. They do not (and did not) have a single distinctive religion officially designated as such throughout the kingdom with its own internal administration-cum-tax system (like the Ottoman *millet*). Newars in the hills who do not speak Newari have only the historical link to the Kathmandu Valley in common with other Newars, and this is much weaker than the tie of a unique religion. Consequently the further their migration from the Kathmandu Valley, the less likely Newars are to feel the pull of the modern ethnic identity that I shall describe.

In view of the history which has given rise to these very different types of settlement, the observer might be tempted to put forward the following definition : a Newar is someone who has Newari as his or her mother-tongue, or who is descended from (or is believed to be descended from) those who had Newari as a mother-tongue in the past. The criterion of mother-tongue is much more satisfactory than territory (many non-Newars have long inhabited the Kathmandu Valley), culture (Newars are very diverse) or simply knowledge of Newari (many non-Newars inhabiting the Valley do know some Newari, and occasionally are fluent). I say that this definition is 'tempting' (and refrain from endorsing it) because it accurately picks out those who speak Newari and therefore constitute the ethnic group of Newars by a modernist criterion, *and* those who are recognized as Newars in the hills. The problem with this definition is that it corresponds neither to the self-definition of Newar cultural nationalists (who wish to exclude all those who do not speak Newari) nor to the traditional definition, whether of the Valley or of the hills, which excludes unclean castes, or even, on a narrow interpretation, all castes other than Śreṣṭha (13).

Wherever they live, Newars come frequently into contact with Parbatiyas. In the hills of Nepal, where the retail trade is mostly run by Newars, I have several times heard the story of the man who died and arrived in heaven only to be cheated by a Newar shopkeeper. G. S. Nepali (1965 : 18) quotes several Parbatiya proverbs : 'A father can never be an enemy, so a Newar can never be a friend'; 'When a jackal howls across the Bagmati the Newar runs away in fright to the topmost floor of the house and there he pretends his bravery by brandishing his sword' (a reference to supposed Newar cowardice); 'Because they eat buffalo they cannot pronounce retroflex consonants'. Nepali continues : 'The Newars on the other hand, retaliate by calling the Gorkhas [= Parbatiyas] as "Pakhe"'. That is to say, the Gurkhas have no material culture of their own to boast of. They are uncivilized' (*ibid.* : 18-19). The most famous Nepali proverb about Newars, which was quoted to me countless times by Newars themselves,

(13) These two uses of 'Newar' are explained at length below.

is : 'The nawab [alternatively : Parbatiya, Chetri] ruins himself with luxury, the Newar by feasting'. This refers to the economic cost of the Newars' rich culture which requires of them far more festivals and religious observances than other groups.

2. *Why Newars are a caste or an ethnic group but not a tribe*

Newars inhabiting settlements of type (v) or (vi) do not on objective criteria constitute a separate ethnic group : they are merely a single caste within Parbatiya culture. Other Newars may be regarded as an ethnic group, but it is important to stress that they do not always so regard themselves. It is perfectly possible, and often advantageous, for Newars from settlements of types (i) to (iv) to present themselves simply as Newars, that is, as if they belonged to single caste within a Parbatiya framework. This view was encouraged by the legal framework of Nepal from 1854 to the 1950s.

Nepali and Newari have only the single term, *jāt*, which covers equally caste, tribe and ethnic group. Writers of Newari sometimes refer to *misājāt*, the *jāt* of women. *Jāt*, deriving from the Sanskrit for genus, in fact simply means 'group'. However, because of its connotations of status, it is considered uncouth to use the word *jāt* except of oneself. Consequently, in asking someone his caste the word *thar*, of narrower application, is usually employed (14). In writing the Sanskrit *jāti* is most often used : sometimes it has to be translated as 'caste', though at others something more like 'people' or 'nation' is intended. This semantic confusion is no doubt the inevitable result of the transition from viewing men as naturally divided into castes to viewing them as naturally divided into nations (i.e. units with a common language and culture but no significant internal divisions).

The distance between the culture of the Parbatiyas and that of high-caste Hindu Newars is small enough for imitation, when desired, to be easy. They worship the same deities, observe most of the same festivals, and pay allegiance to the same Hindu Great Tradition to the south. Thus it is possible for some local observers to deny categorically that the Newars constitute an ethnic group, and for others to assert it. At the same time, even when assimilated to Parbatiya culture, thanks to the caste system, Newars remain Newars, clearly distinguishable, which was no doubt why the Ranas liked to have them as servants : their Newar identity debarred them from competing with their masters.

One of the chief indicators, *the* crucial one many Newars themselves would claim, that defines them and opposes them to other groups is lan-

(14) Cf. Rosser 1966 : 103. In some cases *thar* denotes an exogamous group, but neither Newars nor Chetris with the same *thar* name are thereby forbidden to intermarry :

they merely have the same surname. It is therefore incorrect to translate *thar* as 'clan' (Bista 1972 : 30). On *jāt*, cf. the remarks by Höfer 1979 : 46, 135.

guage. Their language, Newari, is Tibeto-Burman in origin and structure. Its closest neighbour is thought to be Chepang with which it shares 28 % of its vocabulary according to the Swadesh wordlist of a hundred basic words : the linguist Glover estimated that Chepang and Newari must have diverged around 2200 B.C. (Doherty 1978 : 438). At the same time, a very large and significant proportion of Newari vocabulary is Indo-European in origin, on one estimate more than 50 % (Tamot 1977) (15).

In other words, just as Newar social structure is thoroughly South Asian in derivation (notwithstanding the attempts of some scholars to find 'tribal leftovers' in Newar culture), so also their language has undergone at least 1600 years of influence from Indo-European languages : first from Sanskrit and Middle Indo-Aryan dialects, subsequently from Maithili, Persian, Urdu and today from Hindi, Nepali and English. If Newari was ever tonal in the past it is not so today. One of the many paradoxes of the present situation is the frequent refrain of ordinary Newars that their language is 'mixed up' or 'impure' (*asuddha*) : when Newar intellectuals strive to write 'pure' Newari it often ends up being artificial, far removed from ordinary speech and incomprehensible to precisely those Newars who are least influenced by the outside non-Newar world. If Newari were purged overnight of all words of foreign origin it would be impossible to speak coherently at all.

The reason for this is that Newar culture and the Newari language have been firmly within the greater South Asian culture area for at least 1600 years and possibly longer (16). The Newars are not, and have not been within historic memory, a tribe (17). It is possible to argue about what constitutes a tribe, but I would suggest that within South Asia the term 'tribe' has been used by observers to denote one end of a spectrum the other end of which is complex, caste society. In this (specifically South Asian) sense, a tribe has : little internal stratification; few full-time specialists, thus no division of labour; dependence (now or in the recent past) on swidden agriculture or pastoralism; a tendency in the past to lie outside the boundaries of state control; its own religious specialists so that Brāhmanas or other priests of the Great Traditions of South Asia are not regularly made use of.

As the references to the past make clear there is a historical process by which tribes become castes, as caste society spreads. Emically however,

(15) The degree to which this is so varies according to context. Thus D. R. Regmi (1965, II : 823) estimates that Sanskrit 'constituted more than 60 per cent of the Newari vocabulary' in the written sources of the Malla period. On the other hand a glance at the index of Sresthacharya and Tuladhar's *Jyāpu Vocabulary*, which reproduces a recorded chunk of actual speech, shows that in the spoken language the proportion of Indo-European words is much

lower.

(16) It is necessary to avoid calling this 'the Indian culture area' because 'India' refers to a recently created political unit within South Asia, a point about which Nepalis are understandably sensitive. See for example the remarks of D. R. Regmi 1965, II : 388-9.

(17) Thus D. R. Regmi (1960 : 16) remarks : 'It will be a mistake to call the Newars a tribal community'.

since both are equally *jāt*, this is seen simply as the spread of more sophisticated and urban ways to 'jungle' (South Asian for 'primitive') people.

Casual visitors to Nepal have been tempted to class the Newars as a tribe by analogy with the hill tribes such as the Gurungs, Tamangs, etc., because they do not fit neatly into the Parbatiya hierarchy. This is a bad mistake. Unlike the Tamangs and Gurungs, who possess the first four characteristics cited, or the Rais and Limbus, who have all five, the Newars have a highly developed internal hierarchy (far more complex than the Parbatiyas'), and numerous specialists; they depend on sophisticated rice and pulse agriculture, have supported a monarchical state for 1600 years and have a culture pervaded by the Sanskritic notions and priestly services of two ancient Great Traditions, Hinduism and Buddhism.

This is not to say that certain tribal peoples could not have been assimilated to Newar culture or that the ancestors of the Newars at some distant prehistorical period did not have the features defined as tribal, but only that this is so far in the past as to be useless for explaining the present day. Toffin (1977 : 36) has described how the farmers of the Newar village of Pyangaon are probably descended from a group related to the Newars known as Pahari. Toffin himself showed in a subsequent article (1981) that the Pahari, though regarded as 'jungle people' by other Newars because of their traditional occupations (collecting and selling jungle produce), are in fact merely a small and peripheral Newar group.

Newar culture, taken as a whole, is clearly and unequivocally South Asian. Nevertheless it does have a few isolated features which seem to connect the Newars with the north rather than the south. I have already mentioned their language. Some observers have commented that the Newars' use of the carrying pole and baskets (*khamū*) is reminiscent of China (D. R. Regmi 1960 : 13) (18) or that their fascination with historical chronicles is characteristic of Tibet or China rather than South Asia (K. P. Malla, personal communication). In this century certain isolated elements of Tibetan culture have been adopted by the Newars : prayer-wheels in Buddhist monasteries; the Tibetan skirt is worn by modern Newar girls; *momos* (Tibetan meatballs) are a popular Newar snack; certain Buddhist Newars follow the Tibetan form of Mahayana Buddhism. But all these are unimportant individual borrowings which affect not one jot the basic and fundamental South Asian nature of Newar culture (19).

And yet many commentators have sought to emphasize the Newars' connections with the hill-tribes or with Tibet. In some cases this is

(18) Various agricultural practices of the Newars, in particular their taboo on ploughing, have often been taken to illustrate connections with South-East Asia or elsewhere. On the ploughing question, Peter Webster's fascinating article (1980) is essential reading.

(19) Thus Slusser (1982 : 14) remarks :

'Although there was occasional intercourse between the two countries [...] only slight and superficial influence on Nepalese culture can be traced to China. These are essentially in art motifs, and with few exceptions they are confined to the late historic period.'

simply the result of focusing on racial characteristics or language-grouping in ignorance of their culture or social structure. In other cases it has a more political motive : some modern Newar intellectuals seek to define Newar identity, in order to oppose it to the dominant Parbatiyas, in terms of pan-Mongolianism or a pre-Hindu tribal identity (20). Other intellectuals are aware, however, that Newar culture is South Asian ('Aryan') to its core and that rejecting all South Asian elements would lead to absurdity : one would have to start by throwing out every script the Newars have ever used (Visnu 'Alpajna', letter to the editor, *Ināp* 1, 10 : 3).

On a more scholarly level the South Asian identity of Newar culture has been recognized, but attempts are nonetheless often made to separate out 'indigenous' or 'tribal' elements in Newar religion and culture. In my opinion these attempts are usually misguided : those features which differentiate the Newars from Parbatiyas—their consumption of alcohol and buffalo meat (e.g. Allen 1982 : 207, fn. 27), the pervasive role of Tantrism in their religion, their isogamous as opposed to hypergamous ideal of marriage (21), a kinship terminology which seems to identify the mother's brother with the father's sister's husband—all these can be accounted for by the Newars' different history.

The scholar who understood the history of the Valley best was Sylvain Lévi, and he summed it up in his aphorism 'Le Népal, c'est l'Inde qui se fait' (Lévi 1905, I : 28). That is, Newar civilization, if we subtract what has been added by the Gorkha conquest, allows us to see what urban North India before the Muslim conquest was like. He continued :

Sur un territoire restreint à souhait comme un laboratoire, l'observateur embrasse commodément la suite des faits qui de l'Inde primitive ont tiré l'Inde moderne. Il comprend par quel mécanisme une poignée d'Aryens portée par une marche aventureuse au Penjab [*sic*], entrée en contact avec une multitude barbare, a pu la subjuguer, l'encadrer, l'assouplir, l'organiser, et propager sa langue avec tant de succès que les trois quarts de l'Inde parlent aujourd'hui des idiomes aryens... (*ibid.*).

Certainly if one goes far enough back, the Newars' history must begin in a stage that was tribal in the sense defined. But it seems to me very unlikely that tribal practices would survive unchanged and unaffected by 1500 years of non-tribal norms : both Hinduism and, to a lesser extent, the local form of Buddhism have strong views on how the practices usually labelled as 'folk' or 'indigenous' should fit into a larger scheme. The burden of proof lies with those who argue for 'survivals'. The only area in which proof is forthcoming is that of language (see Malla 1981 & 1983).

In his recent major work, *Société et religion chez les Néwar du Népal*,

(20) Thus Vijaya Malla, author of the highly successful Newari play, *Kulā Cakani Tini* (The Horizon will Clear), in which a Newar woman marries a Gurung man, claimed that its aim was 'Mongolian unity' (*Ināp* : 1, 35 : 7). (Ironically the Newar

heroine was played by a Parbatiya Brāhman).

(21) On the Newars' isogamous marriage pattern see Quigley 1984 : 262-274. He concludes that it 'accounts for the sense of introversion which is the hallmark of Newar settlements'.

Toffin has written that the rural farmer caste (Jyāpu) is the 'ancient tribal substrate on which Newar civilization has been built' (Toffin 1984 : 587). It is certainly true that the high castes of the cities are more Indianized and more Hinduized than the farmers of the outlying villages, but it does not follow from this that the latter are in any way tribal. Toffin himself goes on to insist on the unity of Newar culture, its common urban life-style, common forms of social and religious organization, common and distinctive life-cycle rituals. Thus the Newars of the outlying villages who fail to come up to high-caste Buddhist or Hindu standards of orthodoxy are not 'tribal' but simply, as Newars themselves would say, 'rustic'. They are defined thereby as lower caste, but are still equally part of a system which, as a whole, is opposed to the tribal. To quote Toffin himself from a passage in which he rightly disposes of Diumont's (1964 : 98) thesis that there are no castes but only status groups among the Newars : 'Newar castes form a system [...] and that system is profoundly Indian' (Toffin 1984 : 222 ; cf. Greenwold 1975 : 49-50).

The history of the word 'Nepal' illustrates this extremely well. Though very probably Tibeto-Burman and tribal in origin this was wholly and deliberately forgotten until the modern period. After a long survey of different proposed etymologies, K. P. Malla, linguist and Newar scholar, concludes :

On the basis of these scanty linguistic and ethnohistorical evidence, some tentative hypotheses can be hazarded :

- a. *nepā* is a Tibeto-Burman stem consisting of the roots *ñe* (cow, buffalo, cattle) and *pā* (man, keeper);
- b. *nepā* was Sanskritised as *nepāla/nevāla* possibly on the analogy of *gopāla* (cowherd). Tibeto-Burman *pā* can be elegantly transformed into Indo-Aryan *pāla/vāla* (keeper) (Malla 1984b : 68).

The significant sociological fact is that an originally Tibeto-Burman root was always explained historically in a Sanskrit or Indo-Aryan way. Thus in a chronicle from the late fourteenth century (the *Gopālarājavamsāvali*) 'Nepal' is derived from the eponymous ancestor of one of the clans (the Ābhiras) who supposedly ruled the Valley before its history begins with the Licchavis in the fifth century A.D. (Malla 1981 : 19). Subsequently however, in the renaissance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries which laid the foundations for the culture of Malla Nepal, it was preferred to derive it from a sage called 'Ne' who guarded (*pāl*) the Valley and discovered the sacred *liṅga* (emblem of the God Śiva) which then became the temple of Paśupati, the most important Hindu temple of the realm, protector of it, and with a special connection to the monarch, even today (22).

In short, the Newars are a paradigm of complex urban, highly Sanskrit-

(22) For the sage Ne, see Wright, 1972 : 107-8. See below for the more popular, but related folk etymology which derives from 'Nepal' from 'keeping the rules (of the gods)'. Hodgson (1972 I : 51) was given

an alternative Sanskrit etymology by his Buddhist pandit who derived it 'from Ne, the "sender" to Paradise, who is Swayambhū Adi-Buddha, and pala, "cherished" '.

tized South Asian civilization, and are therefore the very opposite of tribal, in the South Asian sense outlined above. However, because they have retained a Tibeto-Burman language, and because they are racially non-Indian (for the most part), observers have frequently been misled and sought for tribal, Tibetan or Chinese connections that are not really there. I have summarized some of these misconceptions in table iv.

TABLE IV

The proper interpretation of some facts which are sometimes wrongly taken to indicate that the Newars have more in common with Tibetan or Himalayan cultures than with South Asia

(True) fact which superficially might seem to align the Newars with Tibetan culture to the north or with the Tibeto-Burman tribes of the Himalayas :

Racially Newars are predominantly Mongoloid.

Newari is a Tibeto-Burman language with cognates in Tibetan, Tamang, Burmese, etc.

Buddhism is an important part of Newar culture.

Caste rules are less strict than in north India.

The status of women is higher than in India; widow remarriage is permitted.

There is a Newar Buddhist myth that Mañjuśrī came from China and settled his followers in the Kathmandu Valley.

Proper interpretation of that fact which shows that Newar culture is a full part of South Asian civilization to the south :

Race need not have anything to do with beliefs about race, as is clearly shown by the origin myths of most Newar castes, which derive their descent from the 'Aryan' south.

Newari is saturated with borrowings from Indo-European languages, always takes its new vocabulary from them and, until the modern period, it was always accepted that the forms of Newari with the most Sanskrit words were the most honorific, impressive and desirable

Newar Buddhism (its texts, architecture and rituals) is derived wholly from Indian Buddhism. Interest in, and practice of, Tibetan Buddhism is confined to isolated individuals, mostly only in the last 100 years or so.

Caste is a fundamental fact of life among the Newars, the strictness of observances depending on the caste. Any differences with north India are the result of historical and geographical factors such as equally come into play in other peripheral parts of South Asia (a).

Among high-caste Newars widow remarriage is rare and strongly disapproved of. Women are strictly controlled, as caste requires.

This is only one of many origin myths; the connection of Mañjuśrī with China is in any case also found in India.

(a) Toffin makes the same point (1984 : 222).

3. *The modern sense of ethnic identity*

Among the young and educated Newars of the three cities, Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur, there is today a strong sense of ethnic identity. The ideological elements which go to make it up are very reminiscent of nationalist movements elsewhere (which is not to say that it is bound to develop in the way that European national movements have, let alone be successful in advancing political demands). These elements are : a glorious past which contrasts with a subject present; a distinct language now being corrupted by the dominant language of the country, a process which may end in the extinction of the former; a unique culture which is submerged by another less sophisticated one, and which is equally in danger of extinction; an old literature in the given language, older and more distinguished than the literatures of the immediately surrounding languages; a particular script identified as the script of the ethnic group, but which, through its subjection, has fallen into disuse; a calendar and an era, associated with the territory and the group, with its own new year which differs from that of the dominant group, and is given no recognition by it; a particular defined territory which has been overrun by outsiders.

The only element one might expect to find which is missing from this list is a myth of common origin. Newar society is a caste society and traditionally each caste has a different myth of origin. A modern ideology which tries to stress common origin must come into direct conflict with traditional beliefs, instead of deriving support from them.

The glorious past with which the Newari language movement identifies is the Malla period (c. 1200-1768). (To a lesser extent it also claims the Licchavi period, A.D. 364-c. 879, for itself.) It is true which the Malla period witnessed a great efflorescence in the Valley that gave it (at least in their present form) most of the impressive religious monuments, and much of the architecture, that attract tourists today. However, even if there was a nascent Newar identity in the Malla period, similar to what one observes today, it was clearly very weak. The Valley was divided into three constantly warring city-states from 1482 until 1768, and what Toffin (1975 : 35) says is entirely correct :

The picture of a united people fighting all the way for its independence is the complete opposite of the truth. At no time during this period would it be correct to speak of Newar national sentiment; wherever one looks there are nothing but divisions, quarrels, plots. Factionalism dominated political life; the three Malla kingdoms never managed to come to an agreement to unite against the invaders; each city-state was concerned primarily with maintaining its own position and turning the situation to its own advantage.

The language in question is of course Newari. Modernization has indeed meant that through its use on the radio, in school and in all official contexts (offices, censuses, official newspapers and announcements), Nepali has made enormous progress at the expense of other languages of Nepal (much

as Hindi has done in North India). This process began even before the modern period (i.e. before 1951). Its pace and obviousness are now greatly enhanced.

Nowadays instruction in school is in Nepali; Newari is only a single subject that may be studied among others at the intermediate and university level (I.A., B.A. etc.); university instruction is largely in English. Newari and other languages of Nepal may be studied as an optional subject in school from eighth class on, but have to compete with foreign languages such as Hindi, French and Japanese. Nepali, English and Sanskrit are compulsory. K. P. Malla (1979 : 19) comments : 'One would not be wrong to say that the essence of this language curriculum is that only those who speak Nepali are Nepalese : Nepalis who speak other languages are like foreigners'.

In these circumstances many Newars, even those inside the Kathmandu Valley, are speaking Nepali to their children in preference to Newari, feeling that this will give them a better chance at school, and that Newari is 'good for nothing' : their children will already have to master English if they go on to higher education, why burden them further by making the national language of their own country a second tongue to them? Thus it is that almost every Śreṣṭha family in the three big cities (but not those in smaller towns and villages), following a lead given many years before by some of the high-caste Śreṣṭha families with positions in the palaces of the Ranas, began speaking Nepali systematically to their children in (very approximately) 1975 (23). The only exceptions to this rule that I know of are the families of a few intellectuals who are particularly attached to Newari. Even many of those active in the Newari language movement speak Nepali to their children or grandchildren. Newar Brāhmaṇs, who nowadays frequently prefer not to consider themselves Newars, evidently switched to Nepali sometime earlier, perhaps in the 1960s. Other castes are as yet still attached to Newari, though many non-Śreṣṭha individuals who are upwardly mobile also speak Nepali to their children, which they justify as 'keeping up with the competition'.

In these circumstances it is understandable that the intellectuals of the Newari language movement are obsessed with ensuring Newari's survival. They know full well the pressures leading to its replacement by Nepali since either they themselves, or their friends and brothers, have started to speak it to their children. At the same time they wish to preserve the distinctive culture that marks them off as different from Parbatiyas and other groups. Foreign researchers interested in the Newars are likely to find their words quoted in local publications, and the headline invariably reads : 'Dr. X says : Newar culture must be preserved' or

(23) My evidence for this is simply that in my experience city Śreṣṭha children under ten years of age or so are addressed by the rest of the family in Nepali. I do not know

why they chose to begin speaking Nepali to their children at this time; it was not the result of any coordinated decision.

'Prof. Y says : the death of Newar culture and the Newari language will be a terrible loss for the whole world'. A letter Sylvain Lévi wrote to Dharma Aditya Dharmacharyya in 1927 (during the Rana period) is frequently quoted by Newar intellectuals : 'Being an old lover of your old language, I suffer on seeing it so ill-treated in your hand as an old mother dealt with too roughly by her son' (24). The strength of feelings on this issue can be seen by the fact that K. P. Malla, in an interview published on 3.4.85, compared the government's policy of cultural uniformity (*sām-skṛtik ektā*) (25) to Hitler's 'Ultimate [sic] Solution' (*Ināp* 3, 12 : 8).

The efforts of Newar intellectuals go largely into producing new literature in Newari. Much also goes into research, and this tends to focus on their particular interests : the ancient literature in Newari, Newari linguistics, the history of Newar culture and Buddhism. 819 books were published in Newari between 1909 and 1977, and a further 487 between 1978 and 1983. Out of the total of 1306, 555 were on religion, and all but 22 of these were Buddhist. Of the rest, 236 were poetry, 79 stories, 48 novels and 37 plays. Forty-six were to do with various aspects of the language and twenty-seven on history and culture (Malla 1979 : 31; 1984a : 2-3).

In the same way that many ordinary Newars will tell you that their language is impure, so also they will tell you proudly that they have their own script, indeed numerous scripts, but that, alas, Newars these days cannot read them. They usually go on to relate that when King Mahendra applied for entry to the U.N. in the 1950s he sent them Devanagari as the Nepali script; this was refused by the U.N. because it had already been submitted by India, so he sent the Newar (i.e. Pracalit) script instead as the national script. Numerous scripts were indeed used in the Kathmandu Valley, though of course the language most often written in them was Sanskrit, not Newari. On certain occasions, particularly for banners saying 'welcome' (*lasakus*), modern Newars make use of the most famous ornamental script, Rañjanā, as 'theirs'. The script most often thought of as 'Newar script' however is the Pracalit ('widespread'). Until seventy or eighty years ago those castes of Newars which were literate would learn this, rather than the Devanagari script. Until that time manuscripts were copied, and other documents and inscriptions for Newar donors were written in it. Like all the scripts referred to it is constructed on the same principles as the Devanagari, and has many letters in common. It is not difficult to learn, but few Newars can read it today. One of the offshoots of the Newari language movement is that some serious young intellectuals run evening classes teaching the Pracalit and other scripts.

(24) Published in *Buddha Dharma wa Nepāl Bhāṣā* 3, 3-4 : 20 (n.s. 1047). Dharmacharyya had been sending copies of his magazine to Lévi and other western scholars. Since it reads rather ambiguously, one wonders whether Dharmacharyya misread 'hand'

for 'land' in the original letter.

(25) Literally *ektā* means 'one-ness' : in other contexts it means 'unity' and as used by the government is here meant to have positive connotations.

Similar to the question of script is that of the Newars' own era. But this has been far more effective in mobilizing support for the language movement. The official era in use in Nepal is the Vikram Samvat, which begins in 57 B.C. Other eras that have been used historically in Nepal are the Kali Samvat (beginning in 3102 B.C.), the Saka Samvat (A.D. 78), the Mandeva Samvat (A.D. 576) and the Nepal Samvat, which began in A.D. 879 (26). Since their era is called the 'era of Nepal' Newars argue that the government should recognize it as the national era of Nepal and see its refusal to do so as symptomatic of its general distrust of everything Newar. The official view is rather that this should be called 'Newar Era'. Much heated ink has been spilt over this issue. Pamphlets on the other side claim that only Newars ever used the Nepal Samvat and that the campaign for it is an attack on national unity and will be followed, if successful, by an attempt to impose a minority language on the majority (Pant 1981). Numerous counter-arguments are put each year by Newar intellectuals. A common one is that if the government prefers to use a foreign era to using one that genuinely belongs to Nepal, just because the latter was historically and is today used principally by a linguistic minority, then this shows that such minorities are not considered to be Nepalis, but are foreigners in their own country.

The Newar position is vividly and dramatically expressed on the 'Newar New Year' (i.e. the first day of the year according to Nepal Samvat) which falls in November. Every year since 1977 a motor rally has been held which encircles the three cities of the Valley and passes under numerous ceremonial arches painted with goodluck symbols and hung with slogans, constructed for the occasion. Groups of young men in the back of trucks and tractors, in cars, on motor-rikshaws, on motorbikes and bicycles, proceed with honking horns and the chanting of slogans. The rally is often referred to as *bhintunā* ('Good wishes!') by non-Newars since this is one of the most frequent chants. In 1982 the organizers in Lalitpur circulated a pamphlet with the following five slogans to be chanted :

The customs of Nepal are national customs
 If customs survive we shall also survive
 Nepal Samvat is the national *samvat* (era)
 If the language survives, the ethnic group (*jāti*)
 will survive, if the ethnic group survives,
 the nation will survive
 Radio Nepal must give time to all languages (27).

(26) On the eras see Slusser 1982 : 384 f. Buddhists also sometimes use the Buddha Samvat beginning in 544 B.C.

(27) It is striking how similar slogans appear in other parts of the world. Laanatz (1984 : 214) reports the slogans 'An end to cultural oppression', 'Berber culture

—Algerian culture' and 'Berber is our mother tongue' from a student demonstration in 1980 in Algeria. Substitute 'Newari' for 'Berber' and 'Nepali' for 'Algerian' and they would be instantly recognizable in Nepal.

The idea of a motor rally was a brilliant one since, more than fund-raising activities, evening classes, literary conferences, or even newspapers, it reaches out to all Newars, even those who are illiterate (more than 50 per cent of the total) (28). On a return visit to Nepal in December 1985 I was told that slogans on behalf of Newari and other minority languages are now excluded from the rally on the grounds that the campaign for the recognition of Nepal Samvat is quite separate from linguistic issues (a claim which shows the growing political sophistication of those involved): thus in Biratnagar the New Year rally is conducted in Nepali and in Birganj in Bhojpuri.

One of the principal reasons why these slogans are so emotive is that traditionally, and indeed still for many if not most uneducated people throughout the country, 'Nepal' denotes the Kathmandu Valley. Its official name was changed from 'the Nepal Valley' to 'the Kathmandu Valley' only in the administrative reorganization of 1962. It was the British who first extended the name of the Valley to the whole area ruled by the Gorkha dynasty, a practice the latter were slow to imitate (29). This explains how Parbatiyas can claim, with some justice, that 'Nepal Samvat' just means 'Newar Samvat'. Newars on the other hand believe that the Parbatiyas have no culture of their own and that they borrow the bits of Newar culture which suit them while denigrating the rest, including the Nepal Samvat, as 'just Newar' (30).

The Newari language movement is also helped by the old idea that Nepal, i.e. the Kathmandu Valley, is a sacred land (*puṇya bhūmi*). This is emphasized in much of the traditional religious literature used by the Newars. It reflects the fact that, by the standards of the Nepalese foothills, the Kathmandu Valley was able to support a level of religiosity and a quantity of temples and priests characteristic rather of urban centres in the Indian plains. Consequently a commonly heard folk etymology

(28) According to the 1971 census only in Kathmandu, of the three districts of the Valley, is literacy over 50 per cent. This includes of course large numbers of non-Newars who are mostly businessmen and office-holders and therefore selected for literacy.

(29) There is some inscriptional evidence that in the fifth to seventh centuries A.D., although the name clearly already meant the Kathmandu Valley to the people of the Indian plains, 'Nepal' denoted only the Tistung Valley, just outside the western edge of the Kathmandu Valley (see map), as far as locals themselves were concerned (Malla 1981 : 19; 1984b : 63). Perhaps it was taken by plainsmen to be the name of the Kathmandu Valley as a whole because the Tistung Valley is the first place in which

the local culture is encountered on climbing up from the plains; and then the extended usage, first made well-known by outsiders, came to be accepted by locals also—as indeed was the case with the subsequent extension of the term to the present state of Nepal in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

(30) Thus K. P. Malla (1982b : 3) protests : 'Nepāla Samvat may be called Newār Samvat only if we are also willing to call the entire high culture that evolved in the Nepal Valley in the last two thousand years as "Newar Culture" rather than the culture of Nepal. If we were to boycott all this as Newar Culture, how much of Nepalese culture will really remain, other than, of course, the Rāṇā palaces and their French windows ?'

derives 'Nepal' from *niyam pāl*, keeping the rules; that is, Nepal is the place where the gods' rules are kept, and where there are more gods, so that the whole place is a sacred terrain (31). This is summed up in the title of Slusser's book on the cultural history of the Valley, *Nepal Mandala*: the Valley is conceived, both in Hinduism and in local Buddhism, as a sacred diagram or *maṇḍala*, the sacred points of which are marked out by temples. And, in spite of the fact that its culture is derived from the south, the traditional Valley inhabitant's dislike of plainsmen ensures that, even if in other contexts he claims descent from the south, he feels that Nepal is a holy place even compared with India.

A further ideological element which irritates Parbatiyas is that the language movement calls Newari *nepāl bhāṣā*, which means 'the language of Nepal'. There is considerable historical justification for this. In old inscriptions going back to the fourteenth century Newari is indeed referred to in this way, or as *deś bhāṣā*, 'the language of the country'. Nepali by contrast was traditionally known as *khas kurā* (= 'the speech of the Khas [i.e. Chetris]'). Jang Bahadur Rana, who established the Rana dictatorship which ruled Nepal from 1846 to 1951, changed its name to *gorkhālī* or *gorkhā bhāṣā* (Clarke 1969 : 251), just as he renamed the Khas (a name with low status connotations according to the Hindu law codes) as Chetri (= Kṣatriya) (Sharma 1977 : 283, fn. 17). The British however called the language 'Nepali' or 'Nepalese' in line with the name they gave to the country as a whole, as early as 1820 when Ayton's *Grammar of the Nepalese Language* was published in Calcutta. Grierson (1916 : 18) attacked this usage as 'misnomer', pointing out that the inhabitants of the country used this term for Newari, not (what we now call) Nepali, and proposed to use the term 'Khas-kurā' instead.

It was only in the 1920s that the Rana regime decided to rename the Gorkha government as the government of Nepal and the Gorkhali language as Nepali. This provoked a spirited but ineffectual protest from a Newar intellectual studying in Calcutta, Dharm Aditya Dharmacaryya (1927), who argued that Newari, not Gorkhali, had the only true title to be called Nepali, and that it was better suited to be the lingua franca of the country. This renaming by the Nepalese government was no doubt due to the Ranas' growing awareness that their regime could not survive merely on the traditional bases of alliance with the British, Hindu orthodoxy and repression, but needed also some element of national consciousness. Already in 1917 certain Nepali writers had argued that Gorkhali had to eliminate all the other 'primitive' (*jaṅgali*) languages of Nepal (quoted in Malla 1979 : 7).

(31) Giving this a modernist twist, D. G. Singh, a disciple of Dharmacharyya's, wrote in 1929 : 'Because the first king governed the State [...] on the principles of equal rights and justice for the people or citizens, the name of the State changed from

Manjupattana to one of Nemapala or Nepala [...] The word Nepala [...] meant in modern words a State governed on the principles of equal rights and privileges and justice' (Singh 1929 : 31).

Many factors remain to remind one how recent is the equation of Gorkhali with Nepali, i.e. its official designation as the national language, as opposed to simply being the language of the ruling group and the lingua franca of the hills. The official government newspaper is still called the Gorkhapatra. Uneducated Parbatiyas still call themselves Gorkhalis and use 'Nepal' to mean the Kathmandu Valley. One of the medals awarded for services to the nation is called the *gorkhā dakṣiṇā bāhu* (Gorkha's Right Hand). The Newars refer to Nepali as *khay bhāy* ('the language of the Khas') or as *parti bhāy* ('the language of the hills'); they call Parbatiyas *khayta*, i.e. Khas, a term which when used in Nepali is considered today to be insulting (Bista 1972 : 15).

Only in 1967, by the first amendment to the 1962 constitution, was 'We Nepalīs' substituted for 'We Gorkhalis' in the National Anthem. In the old anthem there occurred the line 'let us [Gorkhalis] always maintain the Lord's command (*kaṁān*) over Nepal'; in the new version the Sanskrit word *sāsan* is substituted for the English-derived *kaṁān*. More importantly however, by the simple substitution of 'Nepali' for 'Gorkhali' elsewhere in the anthem, the meaning of the phrase has undergone a subtle shift : previously it meant 'may the Gorkhalis always rule the Kathmandu Valley', now it means 'may Nepalīs always rule Nepal'. The old version expressed the determination of the dominant Parbatiya elite to continue to rule and also its sense of difference from the Newar majority in the Valley.

For their part the Newars nowadays define themselves primarily by the contrast with the dominant Parbatiya group. No doubt this tendency has grown gradually more pervasive since the nineteenth century. It accounts for some Newar intellectuals' attempts, already referred to, to define Newar identity in terms of their Tibeto-Burman or Mongoloid ancestry. Since the official designation of the national language was changed from 'Gorkhali' to 'Nepali', 'Nepali' has come to mean 'Parbatiya' to Newars, so that they can say 'we are not Nepalīs' when speaking in Nepali or English, while at the same time asserting 'we are Nepalīs' in Newari.

This self-definition in opposition to another group leads to numerous Newari neologisms and not a few paradoxes. At weddings Parbatiyas put up signs saying *Śubha Vivāha* (auspicious wedding) outside their houses. Both words are in fact Sanskrit and, since Newar culture is equally pervaded by Sanskrit notions, it is 'in objective terms' equally logical for them to use the same phrase. Nonetheless they have started using signs saying *Śubha Ihipā* instead, the latter being a resuscitated Newari word for wedding. They will assert that *vivāha* is a Nepali word and insofar as Newars have used it in the past, or continue to do so, this is just Parbatiya influence. Numerous other examples of the same process could be cited (32). Par-

(32) For instance, Newars have started to use the made-up word *bwanāpau* for 'invitation' on the printed invitation cards now in fashion, because the old word derived

from Sanskrit, *nimantraṇā*, is identified as Nepali. Historically and religiously this is illogical, and can only be understood as an assertion of Newar difference.

batia Brāhmaṇs far outnumber, and are far more visible than, Newar Brāhmaṇs, even within the Valley, so that most non-Newars do not even realize that there are Newar Brāhmaṇs, and will reject the conjunction 'Newar Brāhmaṇ' as a contradiction in terms. Sanskrit as a language is therefore identified in Newar minds with Parbatia Brāhmaṇs and their interests in spite of its equal importance in Newar culture from an 'objective' viewpoint. Thus in the colleges of the Valley, where there is a choice of studying an extra language, Newars usually take Newari (Nepāl Bhāṣā) and Parbatias take Sanskrit.

A similar set of associations was at work when I heard a young Newar say that the secular calendar is Parbatia and the religious calendar Newar, a misconception that is due to the fact that Nepali is the language of all official contexts (in which the secular calendar is used), whereas for Newars what is specifically Newar is to be found in their customs, which are determined by the religious calendar. A similar misapprehension is at work in the belief, for instance, that the caste-surname 'Mānandhar' is Nepali, whereas 'Sāymi' is Newari. Every caste and most places within the Valley have (at least) two names, one colloquial, one honorific. The honorific name invariably derives from Sanskrit. In many cases it is widely used and is very much a part of the Newari language. K. P. Malla (1981, 1983, 1984b) sees the invention and imposition of Sanskritic names as a process of 'cultural annexation' or 'imperialism': in many cases, it is true, the Sanskritic name is a learned afterthought confined to rarely read texts. In other cases however the Sanskritic name is widely used as the official title. And in these cases it is the official title which has been adopted by Nepali-speakers. This Parbatia usage and the upsurge of Newar cultural nationalism have between them led Newar intellectuals to reverse 1500 years of hierarchical values by systematically and self-consciously writing 'Ye' for 'Kathmandu', 'Gubhāju' for 'Vajrācārya' and so on.

Of all the ideological features described it is language which is considered, with some justice, the most crucial. I have pointed out already how those settlements outside the Valley where Newars speak only Nepali are precisely those which are unequivocally part of Parbatia culture, where Newars are one caste among others. Without their language the Newars could be absorbed simply as one regionally concentrated caste in a Nepal which was predominantly Parbatia. The importance of language was expressly argued in an editorial in the highly influential Newari weekly, *Ināp* (1, 37 : 2) on 28.10.83, which took as its text the slogan 'If the language survives the (ethnic) group [or nation] (*jāti*) will survive' (coined by the poet Siddhidas Mahaju). It argued that the slogan should not be taken to mean that in all cases a nation must die if its language dies, since its identity may be preserved by some other factor such as territory. However, it claimed, this is not the case with the Newars. It continued :

Before explaining this it is necessary to make clear the word 'Newar' (*Newāh*). 'Newar' is not a caste (*jāti*) like Brāhmaṇ, Ksatriya, Kāmi or Damāi. Nor is it a religious sect (*sampradāy*) like Hindu, Buddhist or Muslim. Rather it is a com-

munity (*samudāy*) [...] Whoever came to live in the Valley became a Newar. Licchavis from the republic of Vaisali, Śākyaas from Kapilavastu, Miśras (Jhā) from Mithila, Mallas from Mallapur, Thaku Jujus of Thakuri descent, etc. etc. all came to Nepal. And became Newars. But what is the basis on which these are all given the epithet 'Newar'? It cannot be religion (*dharma*) since there are not just Saiva and Vaisnava Newars, but also Buddhist, Muslim and Christian Newars too. Nor can one say that it is on the basis of customs (*samskṛti*). Just as there are some Newars who have to perform the rite of *bare chuyegu* [i.e. they have to cut off their top-knots in the rite of becoming Śākya], so there are other Newars who do not have to perform first head-shaving (*busā khāyegu*) at all. And if you try to define Newars by caste this is even more inappropriate. How can one say that anyone is a Newar because he is a Malla or a Miśra? There are Miśras and Jhās who are Maithil, there are Mallas who are Parbatiyas. Thus the meaning of Newar is given neither by religion, nor by caste/ethnos (*jāti*) nor by custom. Rather it is based on language. Whoever has accepted Newari as his own is a Newar. Maithils (Jhā) began to speak Newari and became Newars. Those who did not speak Newari remained Maithils [...] In order to preserve the existence of our people (*jāti*) we should follow the path shown by [the great poet Siddhidas] and ensure that our language survives. But instead of this we are doing the opposite by removing the language that is the essence of our people (*jāti*) from the mouths of our children. In the place of their mother-tongue we are teaching them the language of others, and this is like cutting off one's nose to see heaven [i.e. allowing those who cannot bear to see others not suffer the same disadvantage as themselves to play on our credulity and get us to inflict the same damage—here : loss of one's mother-tongue—on ourselves] [...] this is no less than a disgusting attempt at suicide by our people (*jāti*) [...].

From a sociological point of view however it is not necessary to suppose that ethnic identity must be based on one single and never-failing criterion. In his discussion of the Nayars of South India Svayambhu Lal Shrestha (1968 : 100) puts the emphasis rather on culture and territory :

Now it may be asked, if the Newars are not Nayars how is it that some of their customs are the same? It is not difficult to answer this question. History tells us that holy men, abbots, kings and their followers and Brāhmaṇas have frequently come to our country Nepal from India to the south; they have had ritual and other dealings with the Newars and have eventually become one with them and become Newars [...] All those who live in Nepal are Newars (33).

In their campaign for the recognition of Newari, Newar intellectuals have also come to support and write about all the minority languages of Nepal. Their argument is that all languages should be given equal treatment, even if Nepali must undoubtedly remain the single national language. Thus Shrestha, in another article entitled 'The influence of Newari on the Tamang language', discusses and praises the writings of a few Tamang intellectuals in Tamang, and continues :

(33) Cf. Acharya (1979 : 14) : 'At this time all the Bais [= Vaiśyas, the pre-Malla rulers of Nepal according to traditional histories] spoke Newari and had become Newars [...] After this, in the time of the

Malla rulers, Maithil Brāhmaṇas and Banjās (Thokde) also came from Bihar. They also spoke Newari. But they are ashamed to call themselves Newars'.

It is the duty of speakers of every language to propagate their own mother tongue. But it is quite wrong for us, in order to propagate and uplift our own language, to ridicule or oppress other languages, to forbid others to speak, write or read in them. Even if we are unable to help in the task of uplifting other languages it is wrong even to think of harming them (Shrestha 1968 : 11-12) (34).

These sentiments are taken seriously since it is only by combining with others throughout Nepal that any kind of recognition can be hoped for. In order to press for the rights of minority languages a Nepalese Mother-Tongue Movement (*Nepāl Māṭrbhāṣā Pariṣad*) was launched in February 1985 and it included Newar, Thakali, Tamang, Gurung, Rai, Limbu, Sherpa, Magar and Tharu members (*Ināp* 3, 6 : 1). One can be sure that its aim of having school-teaching in the mother-tongue for all children will be resisted by the Nepalese government.

4. *The history of the Newari language movement*

In the nineteenth century Newar opposition to Shah and Rana rule was conspicuous by its absence. It presumably did not occur to Newars of any sort (as today it still does not for many) that their ethnicity could or should have political consequences. There is evidence however that it occurred to one man, Laksmi Das Singh, in 1846. He was the Darbar Munshi, or chief clerk in charge of foreign affairs, a post held continuously in his family until the end of the Rana period, and in 1846 he was the only Newar in an important government post. After the Kot massacre in which Jang Bahadur Rana had thirty-two leading Nepalese courtiers killed in order to establish the Rana autocracy (Stiller 1981), Laksmi Das went to Ottley, the acting British resident in Kathmandu, and told him that the whole population 'would be up' in protest against the resumption of land grants, and that his people, the Newars, would rise at his, Laksmi Das', command. Ottley suspected a trick to test whether the British were genuine in their avowals of non-interference (35).

It was not for another sixty or seventy years that opposition to the Ranas' rule on grounds of principle began to appear, and only then did a movement involving Newars emerge; almost immediately Newars began to be active in promoting their language too. Many of the same people were involved both in opposition to the Ranas and in the Newari language movement (though the term 'movement' is rather a misnomer for the latter at this stage), and the Rana regime was harsh on both. Parallel to these, though getting off the ground slightly later, was the Theravada Buddhist movement which, apart from introducing Theravada Buddhism into the

(34) Two examples given by K. Pradhan (1982 : 39) show that in Darjeeling the advocates of Nepali also sometimes use the rhetoric of 'uplifting all languages', though it is perhaps significant that the two cases

cited are both Newars.

(35) Foreign Secret Consultation 165, 31st Oct. 1846. I am indebted to John Whelpton for supplying me with this reference.

Newar community for the first time in at least 500 years, was, and is, the primary vehicle of Buddhist modernism in Nepal.

The first book published in Newari was a Buddhist text, the *Ekaviṃśati Stotra*, translated by Pandit Nisthananda Vajracharya in 1909. Five years later he published his *Lalita Vistara*, a Newari version of the Sanskrit text of that name which also combines into one narrative later traditions drawn from the local *Svayambhū Purāṇa*. Between 1909 and 1919 a total of six books appeared in Newari, five of them Buddhist texts; the sixth was a translation of Aesop's fables by Jagat Sundar Malla, who is remembered today as the first schoolmaster to teach in Newari (Malla 1979 : 10). Although the use of printing marked a new departure, the content of the five Buddhist texts was thoroughly traditional. The first Theravada books were not to be published in Nepal for another twenty years.

In the 1920s Dharma Aditya Dharmacharyya began to campaign on behalf of Newari and Buddhism in India. He was born Jagat Man Vaidya in 1902 in Lalitpur; he was a Śākya and a member of Cikā Bahī monastery. Because his father was the traditional doctor (*vaidya*) of the Prime Minister, Juddha Shamsheer, he was educated at the palace school and received a scholarship to study in Calcutta. There he met, and became a disciple of, Anagarika Dharmapala, the founder of the Maha Bodhi Society, campaigner for Sinhala nationalism and the father of Protestant Buddhism (as R. F. Gombrich and G. Obeyesekere call Buddhist modernism). Dharmacharyya, while continuing his studies in commerce and economics, also studied Pali and became an active member of the Maha Bodhi Society (Lakaul 1984 : 44-7). The name Dharmapala had adopted ('Homeless defender of the *dharma* [i.e. Buddhism]')—he was born Don David Hewavitarana—showed Christian influence; Dharmacharyya's name ('Sun of the *dharma*, Master of the *dharma*') represented no doubt a combination of Dharmapala's influence and an attempt to trump the priests of traditional Newar Buddhism who are known as Vajrācārya, Master of the Diamond (Vehicle of Buddhism).

Popularly Dharmacharyya is remembered today for his campaign to make a national holiday the full-moon of the month of Baisakh (Swāyā Punhi, Buddha Jayanti), the day on which (according to the Theravada tradition) the Buddha was born, attained enlightenment and entered full *nirvāṇa*. He is also remembered for his slogan, 'The name of the language is not Newari but Nepal Bhasa [the language of Nepal]'. A scholarly assessment hails him as the first to establish an association for Newari literature (The Institute of Nepalese Literature, as he styled it, in Calcutta in 1926), the first to publish a newspaper in Newari (from 1923 to 1928) and the first to write a scholarly piece on Newari literature (= Dharmacharyya 1927) (Malla 1979 : 12).

His newspaper was really a quarterly magazine. For the first two years that it appeared it was called *Buddha Dharma*; thereafter he named it in *Buddha Dharma wa Nepāl Bhāṣā* (Buddhism and Newari). Mostly it

consisted of translations of Buddhist texts, but it also included news and poetry by Dharmacharyya himself and by others, such as Yogbir Singh and Chittadhar Hridaya, who were to become distinguished members of the Newari language movement.

In 1926 Dharmacharyya presented a paper called 'Nepalese Language and Literature'. A short history and bibliography of Nepalabhasha or Nepalese' at the All-India Oriental Conference held in Allahabad. (The following year the non-polemical parts were published in Newari in *Buddha Dharma wa Nepāl Bhāṣā* and in English in *Buddhist India*, an English-language magazine which he edited with the Pali scholar B. M. Barua between 1927 and 1929.) The paper included a discussion of the history of Nepal, a list of the types of script used in Nepal and a bibliography of 190 texts in Newari. Its main purpose however was to combat the move of the Nepalese government to call Gorkhali 'Nepali', and to establish that only Newari was entitled to be known as Nepali or Nepalese. The paper ends with an appeal to the Nepalese in Calcutta to campaign for the recognition of Newari as their vernacular, instead of Nepali. He went through four arguments put forward for calling Parbatiya/Gorkhali 'Nepali', and attempted to refute them in turn :

- (1) Parbatia is the court language of Nepal; so it should be called Nepali...
- (2) Nepalabhasha or Nepali or Newari as it is vulgarly known has too many characters and not a few dialects; so it is unworthy to be a common language of Nepal...
- (3) We want to show by calling Parbatia as Nepali that we are a united nation...
- (4) Parbatia has been called Nepali in the Calcutta University, as such Parbatia should be called Nepali (Dharmacharyya 1927 : 22-4) (36).

In reply to the first point he remarked that English was the court language of India, Ceylon and Burma 'but nowhere is English called Hindi, Sinhalese or Burmese'. To the second proposition he claimed (quite contrary to fact) that 'if some of [the Newars] speak Parbatia in Darjeeling or other places, there are a similar number of places where the Parbatias speak Nepalese [i.e. Newari], even as a vernacular'. Against the third point he used several different, in fact conflicting arguments. *Inter alia*, he wrote :

When Norman-French was forced on the Anglo-Saxons there were dialects too ; but Anglo-Saxon remained intact. While Nepalabhasha or Nepalese is the Anglo-Saxon of Nepal, Parbatia is merely Norman-French (37).

To the fourth proposition he pointed out that Patna University did not use the name Nepali, and that he had protested to the Registrar of Cal-

(36) The name was changed on the Calcutta University curriculum from 'Nepali, Parbatiya or Khas-Kurā' to 'Nepali' in 1927 after an appeal from Darjeeling. Patna University followed suit in 1932 (Pradhan 1982 : 37).

(37) Cf. Hodgson : '[The Gorkhalis are] the present race of conquerors and intruders

into Nepal proper, where they may be likened to the Normans in England at the same period after the conquest; and the Newars or aborigines of the Valley to the Saxons of England' (Hodgson papers 18 : 64a, marginal note = Hasrat 1970 : 61 fn. 2).

cutta University that Gorkhali is 'merely a modern dialect' whereas Newari goes back a thousand years.

Dharmacharyya tried to define Newar identity in terms of Buddhism (38) and to claim the title of Nepali for them and their language, to establish Newari's fitness to be the vernacular of Nepal. He was the first Newar nationalist and, in a sense, the last, since those who came after have not been so ambitious for Newari. Had the objective circumstances favoured him he would now be honoured in Nepal as Anagarika Dharmapala is in Sri Lanka. Instead the two sides of his work, the nationalist and the Theravada/Buddhist modernist, have been taken up by different people. Unlike the Theravada movement, or indeed the political opposition to the Ranas, the Newari language movement was never actually a single movement with a single organization, at least not until recently. And, as is discussed below, the fact that Theravada Buddhism could not appeal equally to all Newars meant that the Newari language could not survive under its wing.

Nonetheless, in the Rana period, thanks to the repression which the Ranas meted out to Theravada monks and Newari activists alike, the conjunction 'Buddhism and Newari' of Dharmacharyya's magazine had a certain plausibility. In 1923 a Tibetan monk known as Kanchen Lama, who had preached in the Kathmandu Valley and acquired a considerable following, was expelled from the country along with five Newar disciples (39). The most famous disciple was Mahaprajna, born a Hindu Śreṣṭha, and it was his conversion which angered the Ranas and led to the expulsion of the disciple-monks. The monks eventually ended up in India where Dharmacharyya introduced them to the Maha Bodhi Society (Shakya 1969 : 66).

The [Maha Bodhi] society was the first international Buddhist organization and in the course of years became the centre of Buddhist missionary world [...] Its main purpose was the propagation of Buddhism. But this was combined with nationalistic and social-revolutionary ideals. No wonder that the traditional Rana regime in Nepal had its doubts regarding the contacts of Nepalese Buddhists with the Maha Bodhi Society in the thirties and forties (Kloppenbergs 1977 : 302).

No wonder also that Dharmacharyya's scholarship was eventually stopped, forcing him to abandon his activities in India and return home to a minor administrative post (Malla 1982a : 12).

Theravada Buddhism died out in Nepal, leaving no trace behind, perhaps as early as the eighth or ninth century A.D., though celibate Buddhist monasticism survived within Mahayana Buddhism into the fourteenth

(38) Thus he refers (1927 : 4) to 'later immigrants from the Madhyadeshas [i.e. India] including the Saivite [= Hindu] Newaras and the Gurkhas'. And he claimed three-fifths of the Newars for Buddhism.

(39) On Kanchen Lama and the effect of

his teaching on the Buddhist community of Kathmandu, see Rosser 1966 : 105 f. On the history of the Theravada movement see Kloppenbergs 1977, Amritananda 1982, and Lakaul 1985. See also Mahaprajna's autobiography (1983).

or fifteenth century. Theravada has returned in the modern period as a modern phenomenon. Unlike the Theravada countries from which it has entered (Nepal, Sri Lanka, Burma and Thailand), it does not comprise traditionalist and modernist wings, but itself confronts a traditional form of Buddhism that is very different indeed. Even without this, there is a strong contrast between the traditional (Mahayana and Vajrayana) Buddhism of the Newars and the Theravada : the former involves long and complex ritual, many esoteric rites and teachings, and has an ornate and baroque pantheon; its specialists are a hereditary caste of monk-priests who have thereby accommodated themselves to the surrounding Hindu environment and perpetuated themselves, at the cost of closing off new recruits. Theravada Buddhism by contrast has a simple pantheon ; its ritual is directed solely at Sakyamuni Buddha ; its teachings are relatively easy to understand and forbidden to no-one; it recruits (or is supposed to recruit : Untouchables are a problem) from any caste. In addition to these contrasts, Nepalese Theravada Buddhism, because of the circumstances of its birth, dominates, so far as Buddhism is concerned, such modernist activities as the production of magazines, organizing meetings, conducting historical research, running schools, holding quiz contests, opening medical clinics and establishing links and exchanges with foreign Buddhists.

The first Theravada pamphlets in Newari were published in 1937-42 (Malla 1979 : 18). This was a time of considerable unrest in Nepal. In 1940 an organization called the *Nepāl Prajā Pariṣad* (Nepalese People's Movement) printed pamphlets calling on the people to rise up against the Ranas. Eventually the plotters were found out and tried : of the eight principals, four were executed and the other four, being Brāhmins, were sentenced to life imprisonment and loss of caste. Of the four executed, three were Newars and one, Shukra Raj Shastri, who had been educated at Arya Samaj schools in India after the banishment of his father for membership of that organization, had written a grammar and reader of Newari, published in 1928 and 1933 respectively (40). Among the many other conspirators who were thrown into jail was Chittadhar Hridaya, perhaps the greatest modern Newari poet. While there he composed his great epic on the life of the Buddha, *Sugata Saurabha*. He was not the only one to write Newari poetry in jail so that K. P. Malla concludes : 'The period in jail, far from being a curse for our [Newari] poetry, was an unforeseen blessing' (Malla 1979 : 17). C. M. Maske, who drew the pictures for Hridaya's epic, wrote that 'the jail was for us like a university' (1984, III : 23) because they spent their time there educating one another.

(40) John Whelpton has pointed out to me that it is an ironic comment on the partial nature of the 1951 'revolution' which overthrew the Rana regime that the three roads, Shukra Path, Dharma Path and Ganga Path, named after 3 of the 4 official martyrs,

join at the crossroads with New Road, at the centre of which is a statue to the man who executed them, Juddha Shamsher. For accounts of the plot and its suppression see D. R. Regmi 1950 : 171-85, Joshi & Rose 1966 : 54-5, and Rana 1978 : 143-8.

In 1944 Juddha Shamsher expelled all the Theravada monks who had been operating in Nepal without allowing them to complete their rain-retreat, and confiscated all their books. In 1946 however, following a visit from the Sri Lankan monk, the Ven. Narada Thera, the Theravadins won permission to organize, build monasteries and publish in Newari (Kloppenbergh 1977 : 306-7). Secular Newari writers had to wait another five years, for the collapse of the Rana regime, before they could publish freely.

Space does not permit, nor does my knowledge extend to, a complete survey of Newari literature. From a political point of view the Newari language movement has suffered compared to its position immediately following 1951. After 1951 the news was read on the radio in Newari, as well as in Hindi, Nepali and English. But in April 1965 Newari and Hindi broadcasts were stopped, as well as the popular Newari programme, *Jivan Dabu* (The Stage of Life). By that time the government felt strong enough to suppress all official recognition of Newari. In the 1952-4 census Newari-speakers were revealed to be only 4.7 per cent of the total population, exceeded by Tamang-speakers (6 per cent) among minorities. In the 1961 census the Newari total fell to just 4 per cent (Malla 1973 : 117).

On the other hand, the gradual increase in literacy and the relative affluence of the Valley have meant that there is an increasing demand for books in Newari, and an increasing ability to produce them without state support. Religious books are usually published by the author, or by someone else, as an act of merit. For literary works various associations have sprung up to ensure publication; the two most prominent are *Cwasā Pāsā* (Friends of the Pen) founded by Prem Bahadur Kansakar in Calcutta in 1950 and the *Nepāl Bhāṣā Pariṣad* (The Newari Movement) founded by the poet Hridaya in 1951. Annual literary congresses, and literary prizes (of which the foremost is the *Śreṣṭha Sirapā* donated by Svayambhu Lal Shrestha) publicize literary work. In the campuses there is increasing interest in Newari and Newar students produce their own Newari-language campus magazines. There is no longer a daily newspaper in Newari, as there was for a time, but there are several weeklies, including the influential *Ināp* (Appeal).

The Newari language movement has been hampered all along by the lack of any traditional value placed on the Newari language itself. Rather, there was the feeling, against which Fattēh Bahadur Singh (1976 : 7) had already protested in 1939, that speaking Newari made one 'like a Jyāpu', i.e. rustic and uneducated. To counter this writers of Newari have borrowed the altruistic language of religious and familial devotion. They speak of the service (*sevā*) due to one's mother-tongue (*mā-bhāy*). All the same, it has been an uphill struggle to generate a sense of attachment to the language. By contrast the Theravada Buddhist movement had only to take advantage of an already-existing deeply felt Buddhist devotion and channel it in a new direction.

A second disadvantage the Newari language movement faces has to do with its attitude to politics. Although many of its members have indeed been active in politics, insofar as they have been part of the Newari language movement they have preferred to confine themselves to literary activities, hoping thereby to avoid government censure. Only recently, with the founding of the *Mañkā Khalah* (Cooperative Group) in 1979, which brought together 115 small literary clubs, did the Newari movement take on an organized and overtly political form. Among the demands put forward by it were : Radio Nepal should permit programmes and advertisements in Newari and other languages; primary schooling should be in the mother-tongue and subsequent schooling in one of Nepal's principal languages; one should have the right to speak in court and conduct cases in one's own language. Much encouragement was derived from the fact that, later the same year, when the 1100th New Year of the Nepal Samvat was celebrated, an estimated 100,000 people took part in the procession around the three cities of the Valley. Subsequently the Mañkā Khalah began collecting money for a theatre (*dabuchē*) to put on Newari plays and hold meetings. Though land has been bought, both in Kathmandu and in Lalitpur, a theatre has yet to be built.

5. *The relationship between Buddhism and Newar ethnic identity*

As already described, a large number of Newars (perhaps 20-30 per cent of the total) have strong Buddhist identifications, and most others at least weak ones. Only certain high-caste Śreṣṭhas, and Newar Brāhmaṇs, are systematically opposed to it. By contrast there are no Parbatiya Buddhists; all are Hindus. In particular, the Parbatiya Brāhmaṇs who are family priests and preceptors of the kings of Nepal are very concerned to promote the concept of Nepal as the only Hindu kingdom in the world (*ekmātra Hindu rājya*) and are reluctant to allow Buddhism any status other than that of being recognized as a 'branch' of Hinduism. I have described Dharmacharyya's attempt to align Buddhism and Newar identity; he was doing no more than giving expression to an equivalence that is taken for granted by many modern Newar Buddhists. Being both a Newar and a Buddhist puts them at a double disadvantage *vis-à-vis* dominant values, and they tend to run the two together.

The Newari language movement has indeed received a great impetus from Buddhism. Buddhist devotional books accounted for 35 per cent of all books published in Newari between 1909 and 1977, whereas a mere 2.5 per cent were Hindu (Malla 1979 : 30-1). Hindus tend to read religious books in Nepali and Hindi since far more are available in those languages. There are no Nepali-speaking or Hindi-speaking Buddhists, so books for Newar Buddhist consumption have to be produced locally. This connection between Buddhism and Newari goes back however before the introduction of printing. Vajrācāryas and Śākyas constitute an old sacerdotal—and therefore literate—caste. Literacy in Newari, used for purposes

both religious and secular, goes back further and deeper among them than among Hindus, for three reasons : the main Hindu priestly caste, the Newar Brāhmaṇs, is very small; it identifies itself as Indian rather than Newar; the main Hindu caste, the Śreṣṭhas, insofar as they were aristocratic and literate, also looked to establish their status in ways derived from India (which nowadays includes speaking English in the home).

Yet, in spite of its contribution to the spread of written Newari, Buddhism is an extremely equivocal flag for Newars to rally around. Many, perhaps more than half, of the writers of the Newari language movement have been and are Hindu. These are automatically excluded from any purely Buddhist movement, at least where that movement defines itself as distinct and different from Hinduism. Secondly, it has with time become clear that there is not always and everywhere an identity of interest between Buddhism and the Newari language movement.

Not all the founders of Theravada Buddhism in Nepal began by being hostile to traditional Newar Buddhism : rather it simply failed to provide an outlet for their religious vocation. Many of them had spent time as Tibetan monks. One of them, Dharmalok, the first Theravada monk to live at Ananda Kuti Vihar on Svayambhu hill, wrote a commentary on the *guru maṇḍala pūjā*, the most basic and frequently performed ritual of traditional Newar Buddhism, in the hope that henceforth it would be performed with a fuller knowledge of its contents, and in particular, without then going on to drink alcohol or have animals sacrificed (Dharmalok 1963 : 3-5). On the other hand some of the early Theravadins probably rather hoped that their form of Buddhism would sweep away the traditional Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism of the Newars. In spite of their popularity it failed to do this (41). Newar Buddhists, while supporting the Theravada monks, continued to be attached to their traditional rites and practices; the traditional Vajrācārya Buddhist priests and the Theravada monks have had to learn to tolerate each other (42).

The Theravadins have failed to gain a monopoly of Buddhist piety. Yet, in the long run, they may come to carry day by default. More and more young Vajrācāryas are abandoning the calling of priest if only they can. The reasons most often cited are the lack of remuneration, the difficulty of fasting all day (as required when performing rituals) and the disrespect nowadays shown by the laity. Only those who have no other choice, who are too poor and too uneducated to get another job, and too poor to abandon their traditional parishioners (*jajmān*), continue to be priests by profession. Consequently the respect of the laity for the Vaj-

(41) Those Newar Buddhists who follow Tibetan Buddhism and/or have become monks in that tradition entirely lack the proselytizing spirit of the Theravada movement, and their importance in a discussion of Newar identity is small.

(42) This toleration is only skin deep

at times. For instance, in 1983, *Ananda Bhoomi* (11, 7 : 5-10) published an article in Nepali entitled 'Lamaism is not Buddhism but a copy of Hinduism'. The unspoken assumption was that what goes for Lamaism goes also for Newar Mahayana Buddhism.

rācāryas' learning declines and they prefer the achieved holiness of the Theravada monks to the ascribed holiness, which is ever more tatty, of the Vajrācāryas.

There are other considerations which also lead many Newar Buddhists to prefer the Theravada monks. Both metaphorically and literally (since they publish in whatever form will reach the most readers), they speak a language which seems more in tune with the modern world; their doctrine has no esoteric element; their rituals are simple, obvious and cheap by comparison with the baroque and mystifying complexity of the traditional Buddhism of Nepal. The expensive and time-consuming rituals of the latter no doubt had much appeal and manifold functions in pre-modern Nepal. For the young and educated today they are coming to be seen as a waste of time and money. Were it not for the fact that they are felt to be tied in with Newar identity they would perhaps have been substituted already with Theravada rituals. For the Theravada monks and nuns (strictly the latter are *anāgārikā*, homeless ones, the order of nuns being extinct) are always ready to perform any life-cycle ritual required, and have shown considerable ingenuity in doing so. For instance, Newar girls have to undergo a rite (after the mock marriage) called *bārḥā* (or *vādḥā*) *tayegu*, 'placing a barrier', at sometime before their first menstruation. Traditionally they have to spend twelve days in a room without seeing the sun (43). Recently many Newar families have started sending their daughters instead to Theravada nunnery for twelve days, where they dress in red and are called *ṛkhiṇī* (= Sanskrit, *ṛṣiṇī*, sage-ess).

The Theravada movement is then keen to monopolize Newar Buddhist piety if it can. But its ambitions are certainly not limited to that. It would like to win adherents from other ethnic groups as well. It cannot proselytize, since that is against the law (a law aimed primarily at Christian missionaries and against Islam). But it can accept followers who turn to it of their own free will, and there are a few of these. In order to communicate with other groups it must make use of Nepali; in order to run schools, as it does, it has to teach in Nepali; and to communicate with Newar Buddhists outside the Kathmandu Valley who, though speaking Newari at home, are only happy reading in Nepali, it must publish in Nepali. Furthermore, to win government recognition, to be allowed to send and receive missions abroad, it must use Nepali.

The cultivation of high-level contacts has brought results : the close relationship between Bhikṣu Amritananda and King Tribhuvan resulted in Nepal being chosen to hold the 2500th anniversary of the Buddha's enlightenment in 1956 (Kloppenbergs 1977 : 308-9; Amritananda 1982 : 6). The government recognized the full-moon day of Baisakh (Buddha Jayanti) as a national holiday in 1952, and in 1956 King Mahendra forbade the sale of meat on that day (Amritananda 1982 : 7), thus according to Buddhism a degree of recognition not allowed to any other minority religion. One

(43) For further details on this rite see Allen 1982, and Toffin 1984 : 140-1.

can also see this recognition in the naming of one of the fourteen districts into which Nepal was divided during the reorganization of 1962 as 'Lumbini Zone', and in the more recent renaming of the city of Bhairawa, near to Lumbini itself, as 'Siddharthanagar'. (This is no doubt also motivated by the desire of the Nepalese government to cultivate Buddhist countries in the region).

For all these reasons the main Theravada Buddhist monthly, *Ananda Bhoomi*, founded in 1975, is published in both Nepali and Newari, with also an occasional article in English, unlike the purely Newari magazine *Dharmodaya*, which was the movement's main journal from 1949 till its demise in the 1960s. The principal articles, including the editorial, of *Ananda Bhoomi* are in Nepali. It cannot publish only in Newari for this would cut it off from many readers who do not speak Newari at all, or if they do, cannot read it (44). But to publish only in Nepali would antagonize many of its traditional supporters in the Valley who make a close connection between Buddhism and Newari. What goes for *Ananda Bhoomi* goes also for many other Theravada Buddhist publications. Many are in Newari but many are also in Nepali. Indeed the very same reasons had led even Dharmacharya, as far back as 1927, to try to publish a Buddhist magazine in Nepali (though he called it 'Parbatia') (Lakaul 1985 : 54-7). Should Newari finally die out, Theravada Buddhism will survive. Supporters of the Newari language movement have noticed that Theravada monks are not attached on the whole to the fate of Newari (as indeed they should not be, according to their doctrine) and have reproached them with it (45).

Thus in short, though Buddhism has been important in the history of the Newari language movement, and for Buddhist Newars their Buddhism is often intimately connected with their Newar identity, the two movements have always remained separate. Their interests no longer coincide as they did in Rana times, when they were both equally the object of severe repression.

6. Newar identity ancient and modern

Having considered the modern, assertive form of Newar identity, it is now time to reconstruct the traditional, much weaker and largely implicit idea of Newar identity which lies behind it. Large-scale social change is so recent in Nepal that the latter co-exists with the former, indeed the general context of caste and territorial attachment which explains the traditional sense of identity simultaneously explains why the Newari language movement, in spite of its appeal, is so weak and divided.

(44) It is indeed very common in South Asia (and is true of many literate Newars) that individuals read and write far more fluently in the language they have been educated in than in their mother-tongue, if they can read in the latter at all. Brass

(1974 : 71) cites the case of a Maithil man who could only write in Hindi.

(45) I refer in particular to a letter to the weekly *Ināp* (1, 27) charging Buddhist activists with indifference to the anniversary of Dharmacharya.

As I have had occasion to note already, 'Newar' is simply a 'colloquial Prakrit form of "Nepal"' (Malla 1984b : 67). However the equivalence is and was known only to the learned (46). Nonetheless, Newars feel that they have a special claim to Nepal (i.e. the Kathmandu Valley) and that all others (Parbatiyas, Muslims, Indians, Tibetans) who now live there are interlopers. Paradoxically, at the same time, *within* Newar society different castes claim status by tracing their descent from outside, to the 'Aryan' south (e.g. the Rājkarṇikārs, sweetmakers, claim to be descended from Indian Brāhmaṇs; the Śākya claim descent from the tribe of the Buddha). Each caste has its own sense of identity, an amalgam derived from a particular profession, its own myth of origin, certain forms of worship and deities peculiar to it, and the practice of endogamy. Theories which define ethnic groups purely in terms of a subjective sense of difference would make an ethnic group of each caste.

In fact it is possible to discern a sense of ethnic identity in traditional Nepal which is more than mere caste identity, though it is strongly influenced by caste ideology. This sense of identity consists in the relationship of given groups, in particular the dominant ruling caste, to a particular place. On this way of thinking the paradigmatic locals are the Kṣatriyas, that is to say, the kings, nobles, courtiers, in short the entire ruling class or caste (the distinction, at this level, becomes fuzzy as there is reason to believe that anyone who becomes sufficiently powerful eventually acquires the requisite caste status). Although in terms of purity the Brāhmaṇs rank above Kṣatriyas, they represent transcendental values, not local ones. It is the Kṣatriyas, i.e. the Śreṣṭhas, who are the paradigmatic Newars on the traditional caste-bound view. All other castes are their priests, artisans, barbers, servants or other specialists. In Dumontian terms, it is the Kṣatriya who encompasses, i.e. stands for, the rest where local ethnic identity is concerned, although of course this whole sphere is subordinated to that of caste-as-purity in which the Brāhmaṇ encompasses all other castes.

Other castes cannot claim Kṣatriya status in the present, but they can do so in the past. Thus various middle-ranked Newar castes claim (and are granted) descent from dynasties which ruled Nepal before the Malla period. These are shown in table v :

(46) Hodgson's pandit pointed it out to him (Hodgson 1972, I : 51). Because 'Nepal' and 'Newar' have different meanings, although the same etymology, it is incorrect to use 'Newari' as an adjective (e.g. 'Newari customs' for 'Newar customs') as writers in English tend to do. 'Newar' is not the name of a place; 'Newari' should only be used of the language. Even as a name of the language Newars object that it is a

misnomer : as a Tibeto-Burman language it should simply be called 'Newar' (as first suggested by the poet Hridaya during the period of curriculum reform in the early 1960s), just as the language of the Gurungs is called 'Gurung', not 'Gurungi'. However, 'Newari' as the name of the language is so firmly established in academic writings that it would only cause confusion to avoid it here.

TABLE V

Claims to descent from previous dynasties who ruled Nepal

DYNASTY	CASTE
Mahiṣapāla	Maharjan (Jyāpu) of Tistung
Gopāla	Śreṣṭha of Thankot and Tistung-Palung
Kirāṭa	Vyañjānkār (Tepe) of Lalitpur
Vaiśya Ṭhakurī	Thaku Juju of Kathmandu and Lalitpur
Nanyadeva's dynasty	Various high-caste Śreṣṭhas

There are other castes which also claim a prestigious Kṣatriya descent : the Butchers claim to be fallen Kṣatriyas chosen to sacrifice buffaloes to the goddess Taleju for the sin of defecating with their back to the sun; the Kisi lineage of high-caste Śreṣṭhas in Lalitpur claim descent from the solar dynasty which ruled before the Vaiśya Ṭhakurīs (47). There is, at least where Hindus are concerned, a very rough correlation between high caste and more recent provenance (48). A more ancient local pedigree can simultaneously be a source of pride to the lower castes, and reason for high castes to regard them as inferior. The only major caste group which seems not to have a myth of origin at all, which is evidently so at home in the Valley as not to need to explain its presence, is the farmer caste (collectively 'Jyāpu') of the big cities. Because of this and because of their settlement in ancient areas of the cities, historians have been tempted to see them as descendants of the inhabitants of Nepal in the Licchavi period made into Śūdras by the caste reforms of the early Malla kings (Acharya 1979 : 15).

Nowadays these lineages or groups claiming royal antecedents may be said to be 'our Newar kings', especially when, as in the case of the Thaku Jujus, they still perform a royal role in certain rituals. This is probably a modern usage, opposing them to the ruling Parbatiya dynasty. There is a Lalitpur Śreṣṭha lineage, from which the poet Jyan Bahadur Newa comes, which is actually called 'Newā' (49). In the past however kings

(47) The name 'Licchavi' was forgotten in traditional histories of Nepal.

(48) Gaborieau (1977 : 53) reports that the higher social prestige of the Kashmiri Muslims compared to the Hindustani Muslims is based on their earlier migration to the Kathmandu Valley.

(49) It was probably these, and possibly other noble Śreṣṭha clans, who claimed descent from the Nayars of Kerala, making use of the phonetic similarity between 'Nayar'

and 'Newar' to claim a prestigious Kṣatriya identity from the South (cf. Wright 1972 : 167). They have thereby given rise in certain traditions to fanciful explanations of the origin of the Newars as a whole in South India (Hasrat 1970 : 53). Sv. Lal Shrestha (1968 : 86-112) discusses the theory that the Newars are Nayars migrated from southern India and remarks that now that the Newars have adopted certain western customs it will not be long before someone

never claimed that they were Newars. On the contrary, they sought to establish their descent with more prestigious links to India and to the gods.

The first precisely datable occurrence of the word 'Newar' is in 1652 when it is used as the name of the language *newāra bhāṣā*, i.e. Newari. In modern Newari the equivalent *newā-bhāy*, language of the Newars, is used. 'Newar' is first used with a clear ethnic connotation in 1684 when a traditional diary records: 'although the Khas [= Parbatiyas] came, all the Newars fought among themselves' (50). Invasions from outside the Valley, by Parbatiyas, Maithils or Muslims, had been frequent in previous centuries, so it is likely that this usage was not new in the seventeenth century even though we have no record of it before then. What is harder to prove is that the Kṣatriya class was the primary referent at that time, though the evidence suggests that it was.

Barré *et al.* report from Panauti, a Newar town of 3,000 beyond the rim of the Valley :

It is necessary to speak of castes speaking Newari rather than of Newars because there is in Panauti a subtle difference between ethnic identity and the linguistic group. Only the Chathariya [= high-caste Śreṣṭhas], the Shrestha and, to a certain extent, the Tamrakar are considered to be true Newars. Contrary to the usage found inside the Kathmandu Valley, the members of other castes do not consider themselves Newar. 'Newar' here connotes economically and politically dominant high caste.

Further afield, in the hills of Nepal, 'Newar' invariably refers *only* to those classed as Śreṣṭhas (cf. Toffin 1984 : 380). Others, whether Buddhists (i.e. Śākyas and Vajrācāryas) or service castes, are not so considered.

Kirkpatrick, visiting the Valley in 1793, recorded :

With respect to the Bhanrās [i.e. Śākyas and Vajrācāryas], they have already been mentioned, as being a sort of separatists from the Newars; they are supposed to amount to about five thousand; they shave their heads like the Bhootias [i.e. Tibetans], observe many of the religious rites, as well as civil customs, of these idolators, in a dialect of whose language they also supposed to preserve their sacred writings (Kirkpatrick 1975 : 183-4).

Kirkpatrick was wrong about the language of the Buddhist scriptures—it is and has always been Sanskrit—but it is significant that the Śākyas and Vajrācāryas were perceived as 'separatists from the Newars'.

comes up with the theory that the Newars originated in Naples and that the name 'Nepal' derives from this (*ibid.* : 99) ! It is an unsolved historical problem how it was that Śākyas who were traditional image-makers were known as *Nivā* or *Newā* (cf. Oldfield 1974, I : 82; Hodgson papers 60 : 146).

(50) Regmi 1965, III, II : 63. The edicts of Ram Shah of Gorkha from the early part of the seventeenth century also use 'Newar' in a clearly ethnic sense, mentioning them as a group which, like the Magars and the Khas, and unlike Brāhmanas, ascetics and relatives of the king, must pay with their life for murder (Riccardi 1977 : 55).

There is evidence of the conjunction of 'Newar' with 'Śreṣṭha' from Hodgson's papers (which date from the 1830s). A list of wholesale establishment (*koṭhi*) licensed by the government according to ethnic categories gives the following figures : Śreṣṭha Newars (*Śreṣṭha Nivā*) : 32, Udās [= Urāy] : 66, Bāḍā [= Śākya and Vajrācāryas] : 30, and foreigners (*deśavārṇā*), subdivided into Hindus : 7, and Kāśmīrīs [= Muslims] : 4 (51).

There is a parallel between the Parbatiyas' view of the Newars and the Newars' view of Parbatiyas. Newars refer to all Parbatiyas as *khay* and to their language as *khay-bhāy* ('language of the Khas') even though the Khas are only the Kṣatriya (Chetri) caste and do not include Brāhmaṇs from the Parbatiyas' own viewpoint. This is clearly the same as the Parbatiyas viewing Śreṣṭhas as typical Newars, even though such a view would be not only contested but often inverted by other Newars of the Valley.

In short, in outlying areas, in historical records and in the view of Parbatiyas, only Śreṣṭhas are Newars. Other castes are Newars only by association, if at all. However, in the large cities of the Valley today, the centre and origin of Newar identity, this is emphatically not the case : all those speaking Newari as a mother-tongue are considered, and consider themselves, Newars (52), even the unclean Butchers, who outside the Valley, as Caplan (1975 : 26) clearly records, do not so consider themselves. The intensification of Newar identity which has taken place in the Valley, combined with the propensity of the Śreṣṭhas to be upwardly mobile, and to imitate Parbatiya customs, leads to what one might call the Śreṣṭha Paradox : from the outside (and from their own point of view) they are the most typical Newars, but from the inside, as far as other Newar castes are concerned, they are the least Newar.

From within the Śreṣṭhas are highly heterogeneous : they count among their number high-caste aristocratic families (the Chatharia) descended from the nobles of the Malla period, rich families who served in the Rana bureaucracy and palaces, shopkeepers and traders, both in the Valley and throughout Nepal, farmers and peasants in the villages of the Valley and throughout Nepal. They marry over greater distances than any other Newar caste, and although arranged marriages must be with a Newar, indeed with a Śreṣṭha of the right status, language is no bar : Nepali-speaking Śreṣṭhas from outside the Valley are not excluded (cf. Furer-Haimendorf 1956 : 17), a fact which shows how little language matters to traditionally-minded, and indeed most modern, Newars. Śreṣṭhas are the first to imitate Parbatiyas, to start speaking Nepali, to adopt Parbatiya customs. Only when they have led the way do other Newar castes follow suit (53).

(51) Hodgson papers 53 : 130. Gaborieau (1977 : 42) quotes this document but omits to cite the Urāy.

(52) The only exception here are the Untouchable Dyolā (Nepali : Poḍe) who do not see themselves as Newars. I owe this point to Rajendra Pradhan.

(53) Acculturation can also go in the

other direction, from Parbatiya to Newar, although it must nowadays be very rare. Toffin (1984 : 379-80) gives the example of eight Puri families of Panauti who are all descended from a Parbatiya and his Jyāpu wife : they speak Newari, observe Newar customs scrupulously and—being rich and powerful—are now accepted as Śreṣṭhas.

A much commented Parbatiya custom first adopted by Śreṣṭhas (and amongst them first by Āmātyas) but now also common with other Newar castes too, is for the bridegroom to accompany the procession to fetch the bride. Everyone knows that the old Newar custom is for him to wait at home. Another custom of Kathmandu Śreṣṭhas, performing *bārhā tayegu* only after the first menses not before them (Toffin 1984 : 140), must also be due to Parbatiya influence. As pointed out elsewhere, Newar Brāhmaṇs switch away from Newari and Newar customs even sooner than Śreṣṭhas, but they are so few in number that their influence on other castes is less profound. This process of assimilation includes abandoning Buddhist links in the case of families with Buddhist family priests : just as the Vajrācāryas and Śākyas sometimes run together Buddhism and Newari as parts of Newar culture to be preserved, so assimilationist Śreṣṭhas run them together as backward, low-class traits to be abandoned.

The Śreṣṭhas adopt Parbatiya culture at two different points : those who emigrated to the hills have naturally assimilated to the Parbatiyas since they use Parbatiya priests and are surrounded by Parbatiyas; secondly, inside the Valley, the most prestigious Śreṣṭha families have been those who became rich and powerful by serving at the Rana courts, and they assimilated to their employers in order to diffuse any suspicion of disloyalty that might be harboured against them. At the same time, Śreṣṭhas have been very prominent in the Newari language movement, and this is hardly surprising since they are the most educated and westernized of all Newar castes.

Since 1951 the Kathmandu Valley, and more particularly the Kathmandu-Lalitpur conurbation, has experienced extremely rapid social change, economic expansion and immigration. Prior to 1951 the Rana regime sought to isolate Nepal from the world; with their demise, though no bigger than a small Indian town, Kathmandu suddenly became a centre for international tourism, the base for numerous relief agencies and embassies and the site of a lucrative entrepôt trade between Hong Kong and India. As one indicator of the disruptive forces let loose by this, land prices in Kathmandu and Lalitpur rose between 6.3 and 8.3 times in real terms between 1954 and 1978; rice became 4.5 times more expensive in the same period (Manandhar & Ranjitkar 1981 : 79).

In modern Nepal Newars as a whole have done well, and among them the Śreṣṭhas better than any other caste. According to one estimate, based on collecting surnames, Newars account for 30 per cent of university teachers, 32 per cent of authors published in Nepali, 24 per cent of journalists writing in Nepali and English, 30 per cent of the civil service, 6 per cent of the military and 8.14 per cent of the representatives elected to the National Assembly in 1981 (54). According to the census of 1971, 4 per cent of the population speak Newari as their mother-tongue; Newars may then account for 6 per cent or so of the total population. Thus these

(54) Figures dues to K. P. Malla (personal communication).

figures represent a very high level—hardly grounds for resentment one might think. Yet one must remember that most of these jobs (except the army, to which Newars have only been admitted since 1951 and to which even today few of them aspire) are recruited from the Kathmandu Valley, in which Newars represent something around 50 per cent of the population. Subjectively therefore, they may often have good reason to feel that they are discriminated against and that their chances are less than those of Parbatiyas. This situation has produced two different results : assimilation and the abandonment of Newari on one hand (condemned by other Newars as produced by 'an inferiority complex'), and aggressive assertion of a Newar identity based on language and culture on the other.

As education spreads among other castes and they start to be upwardly mobile, it is the Śreṣṭha model that they imitate. Further, many Newars of lower castes who have emigrated to the hills of Nepal or elsewhere have started to call themselves 'Śreṣṭha' and imitate, as far as they are able, the Śreṣṭhas' Hindu identity. In Darjeeling all those of Newar descent call themselves 'Pradhān' (noble), another Śreṣṭha surname. Even in the Valley there is a process of Sanskritization taking place whereby farmers and others eventually try to take on Śreṣṭha status (55). Other Newars will often tell you that because of this the Śreṣṭhas are the most 'spoiled' or 'mixed' caste, and that one can never be sure of the status of someone who claims to be a Śreṣṭha. On a much smaller scale a similar process can be observed among Buddhists. Firstly, within the Urāy caste members of other sub-sections who used not to call themselves 'Tulādhār' (e.g. Sthāpit, Āwā) have started to call themselves this—just as certain high-caste Śreṣṭhas, who would not originally have called themselves that (but by their own Newari clan name) now do so : this is a (relatively modern) process of homogenization. Secondly, the offspring of a Vajrācārya, Śākya or Urāy father and a lower-caste mother tend to call themselves 'Tulādhār'—just as, were the father Śreṣṭha, they would call themselves 'Śreṣṭha'. Both in the Buddhist and the Hindu case this latter process is a thoroughly traditional kind of upward assimilation which has suddenly become pervasive, in a very untraditional way, due to new economic possibilities, modern education and the resultant weakening of the traditional social structure of caste and kin.

It is unclear whether the assimilationist tendencies of the upwardly mobile but conspicuous minority or the increasingly influential rhetoric of the Newar cultural nationalist movement (also a minority) will win out in the long run. The majority, that is to say, the older generation, the illiterate and the peasant farmers who have no aspirations to office jobs (at least for themselves), are well aware that they are different from others and may have no great love of other groups; nonetheless they are

(55) On this process see the long article by Rosser (1966) and the qualifications to his thesis made by Quigley (1984 : 44-6).

for the moment quite uninterested in asserting their Newar identity or the Newari language. It does not occur to them that they are under any threat; from their point of view to campaign vigorously for Newari and Newar culture is about as useful as to campaign for Newars to breathe air. This is not to say that the activists who have devoted their wealth and sacrificed their chances of advancement in the cause of the Newari language are motivated by material considerations (on the contrary); but it is to say that the political success of their movement, the appeal it has for the majority of Newars, may yet depend on such mundane matters.

A comparison with the Maithili language movement, a case known to and relatively close to the Newars, is extremely useful. By focusing on a movement which has failed to carve out a political unit for itself, or indeed to achieve any of its aims, and contrasting it with two very strong communal movements based on religion (the Sikh and the Muslim), Brass (1974) brings to light the features which usually ensure success for the language of a given group. A comparison shows that the Newari language movement has some advantages over the Maithilis'.

In the first place, and most importantly, the Maithilis lack a religious identity different from that of their neighbours (*op. cit.* : 116). In this the Newars are similar, in spite of the existence of Buddhism in their midst. Secondly, however, the Maithili-speaking area, and the people living there, lack sharp boundaries; and the same goes for the language itself : Maithili merges into other dialects which have been absorbed by Hindi rather than Maithili (*ibid.* : 61); the inhabitants of the Maithili-speaking area have always been tied into those of elsewhere by marriage (*ibid.* : 56), and in the modern period the elite has preferred on the whole to support Indian national integration (*ibid.* : 60). In this Newari is at an advantage : the Kathmandu Valley is a clearly defined area with a distinct identity historically and religiously; Newari does not merge gradually into Nepali; Newars remain Newars to Parbatiyas even when they no longer speak Newari. A third reason for the failure of the Maithili movement is that there is a sharp distinction there between the culture of the elite, the Brāhmaṇs and the Kāyasthas, and the rest; the Brāhmaṇs even speak Maithili differently from the others and had, in the past, their own script unknown to others (*ibid.* : 67). By contrast, in spite of the caste hierarchy within Newar society, there is no such radical disjunction and even relatively low castes (though not as yet unclean or untouchable castes) can be absorbed into the language movement.

In spite of all this, it may turn out that Maithili succeeds in preserving itself better than Newari, simply because it is spoken by more people (possibly twenty million, to Newari's something over half a million) and because it exists in a politically less sensitive area (though in the Maithil case, the fact that they straddle the border with India makes them sensitive from the Nepali viewpoint). Newars predominate in the area that happens to house the capital of Nepal. In an outlying area it would probably

do no harm to allow a regional language some kind of semi-official status. In the capital such a possibility seems far more threatening.

7. *Conclusion*

The Newar case displays several features which are probably typical of cultural nationalisms in a Hindu caste context. The modern cultural nationalist movement has to base itself on language, a factor which traditionally was only unconsciously an element in Newar identity : even now dialectal differences serve to divide Newars and many village or Bhaktapur Newars prefer to speak Nepali in Kathmandu in order to avoid ridicule. *A fortiori* religion and caste can only divide Newars. The territorial principle also divides them, since traditional rivalries between one city and the next, one quarter and the next, remain strong. One further factor weakens Newar ethnic identity : the very caste on which traditional identity focused (the Kṣatriyas) was and remains the caste most likely, after the Brāhmins, to have wider non-ethnic identifications. All this explains why Newar ethnic solidarity has been conspicuously absent in the past. As to the future, caste and the inward-turned, extremely local traditional sense of identity are clearly declining : increasingly widespread secondary and tertiary education has a homogenizing and radicalizing effect. Whether the discontents caused by Nepal's ever-worsening economic situation will increase support for specifically Newar movements, whether, in other words, the Newars' strong cultural identity will begin in spite of their history to have political consequences, only time will tell *.

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